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PRIVATE EYE

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wisdom

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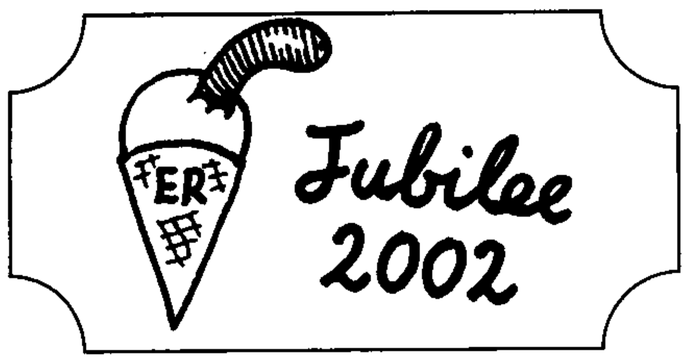
Gnome

I AM honoured to be able to announce that my subsidiary The Gnome Sausage and Ice Cream Co has been asked to sponsor the Queen's Jubilee in 2002. Naturally, we at Gnome understand that the sponsorship must be tasteful and discreet, as befits this historic occasion.

What You Will See

- Queen and Duke of Edinburgh to process to Westminster Abbey for Service of Thanksgiving in ice cream van whilst Band of Grenadier Guards plays much-loved "Just One Gnometto" theme.
- Queen Mother dressed as giant sausage distributes "Maundy Pork Chipolatas" to the poor and needy outside St Paul's Cathedral.
- New red, white and blue "Fergietta" ice cream log to be given to all British schoolchildren to eat on the day.
- "The Camilla Porker Bowles" organic pork pie (no pork or pie) to be presented by the renamed Prince of Walls and served to Her Majesty The Queen at a special Royal Banquet at the Mansion House.



These are just a handful of the exciting but dignified events that will make it a "Sausage And Ice Cream Day To Remember".

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ABC

All the top Tories!

- *Faking Mr Faqey: How low the tabloids go* 4
- *Why Fleet St needs its Spice: Hackwatch* 5
- *Labour's Big Mac meal deals in Brighton* 6
- *Bald man in comb row: the Tory leadership* 7
- *Rushdie, Barker et al: Books* 24,25
- *The hotel-keepers who make asylum pay* 26
- *Putting it on the Ritz: Slicker on Fayed* 28

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"The best advice you will ever be given is this: beg, steal, borrow, sell the wife and kids, even the golf clubs, but whatever you do, get enough funds together for a savagely hefty bet on today's Germany versus England World Cup qualifier. Never in the history of sport has a contest been so certain to end in a draw."

— Derek McGovern,
Daily Mirror, 1 September

PETER HAIN, minister for Europe and former scourge of the establishment, last week boldly told the *Independent*: "I have always thought that the single currency is a logical development of a single market and there is a need for it to introduce price transparency and the harmonisation of costs".

Could this by any chance be the same Peter Hain who wrote that seminal 1995 book, *Ayes to the Left*? In it, that Peter Hain said of the single currency: "The policy, legally enshrined in the Maastricht treaty of a European Central Bank independent of democratic control and dedicated almost exclusively to price stability must be reversed. It is economically disastrous and politically dangerous... why should monetary policy be taken out of democratic control and left to bankers?"

TORY leadership hopeful Ken Clarke has been criticised for being deputy chairman of British American Tobacco, the firm whose cancer-causing products are sold and smuggled throughout the world.

However, Clarke is also chairman of Unichem, "a major distributor of pharmaceutical, medical and healthcare products to around 5,000 retail pharmacies and hospitals throughout the UK", whose official slogan is "delivering healthcare".

So Clarke makes £100,000 a year making people ill with cigarettes and £120,000 a year delivering the drugs to make people better. How can the Tory party resist such inclusiveness?

A SMALL question about Iain Duncan Smith's background is raised by the spate of recent articles dealing with his role as a rebellious backbencher in 1992 and 1993.

According to Matthew D'Ancona in the *Sunday Telegraph* (19 August), "his legal knowledge [was] valued by the Eurosceptics who met at No 17 Great College Street in Westminster to scupper the Maastricht bill." A *Daily Mail* feature on 23 August claimed that Duncan Smith was at first only "a supporting actor" in the Eurosceptic campaign, "but gradually his legal knowledge… confirmed him as the ringleader of the revolt." A *Mail* story on 29 August recalled yet again how other anti-European Tory MPs had deferred to "Duncan Smith's legal knowledge".

Before becoming an MP in 1992, Iain Duncan Smith worked as a soldier and then as a minor-league businessman. He has never studied law, nor practised it. So whence came all this allegedly awesome expertise in legal minutiae?

"NEW" Labour's favourite private healthcare boss, Dr Chai Patel CBE, is an avid proponent of public private partnerships in the health sector and the man credited with the idea of transferring elderly patients to private nursing homes to free up NHS beds (see *Eye 1024*).

As an adviser to the government on elderly care and a member of the cabinet office's better regulation taskforce, he is also in a position to influence government policy. One company that has benefited from his advice is Westminster Healthcare, which provides mental health beds and scanners to the NHS, and is now up for sale for £500m. This is good news for the chief executive and 10 percent shareholder of Westminster, Dr Chai Patel.

WHEN the government sold Belfast International Airport to a management-led consortium for £32.75m in 1994, it defended the decision by saying control of the airport would remain in Northern Ireland (see *Eye 905*).

Just two years later the managers sold the airport on to Welsh property company TBI, which also owns Cardiff and Luton airports, for £72.4m cash plus the repayment of £30m in outstanding loans, leaving the directors with a tidy profit of £6m each.

TBI is now the subject of a hostile take-over bid from the French company Vinci, which has valued the airport group at £516m, so even more private individuals are going to cream a profit off this once public asset.

***PRIVATE EYE* has been refused a press pass for the ministry of defence-backed defence systems and equipment international (DSEI) arms fair that runs from 11 to 14 September in London Docklands.**

According to Emma Welch, of conference organiser Spearhead Ltd, the pass was refused "because our exhibitors don't see *Private Eye* as a legitimate journal".

The event will be addressed by a defence minister, Geoff Hoon, but *Private Eye* cannot be there because the organisers "have some difficulty in reconciling your interest in the exhibition with our admission criteria" and fear the magazine is "detrimental to our purpose".

All the top arms manufacturers exhibit at the massive fair, including armoured car maker Alvis, British Aerospace and cluster bomb manufacturer Hunting. While their kit is tough enough to face battle, it seems the exhibitors themselves are afraid of a little scrutiny.

"Tell me I won't have to dress as a Labour MP!?

Street Of Shame

THE police's decision not to prosecute Neil and Christine Hamilton came as no surprise in Fleet Street: virtually every hack covering the story, from tabloid and broadsheet alike, realised the rape allegation wasn't true and told their superiors so.

Yet editors continued to pursue the tale with a disregard for the libel laws that would be inconceivable had it been anyone other than the Hamiltons. Why?

Step forward Max Clifford. Such is the awe in which certain editors hold Clifford that they declined to question his motivation, or his links with the Hamiltons' arch-enemy Mohamed Fayed.

Even *News of the Screws* hacks swiftly concluded that Nadine Milroy-Sloan's claims were phoney. But that didn't deter editor Rebekah Wade from doing a deal via Max Clifford to run the woman's accusations in sordid detail. Was Rebekah merely desperate for a VIP sex scandal to boost her silly-season sales? Or was she afraid to upset Max – who has flogged the *Screws* most of its major scoops in recent years?

Clifford himself insists he hasn't received a penny for "advising" Milroy-Sloan, and has blamed the Hamiltons for "going public" and "forcing" his poor, publicity-shy client to drop her anonymity (in return for a *Screws* cheque in the region of £75,000). Newspapers seemed curiously reluctant to ask why, in that case, the supposed rape victim had contacted Max in the first place if she wasn't after publicity and a big payday.

Max, who became untypically rattled and short-tempered during TV interviews as the story unravelled, has claimed Milroy-Sloan first approached him about a "non-criminal" sex story involving the Hamiltons, before the alleged "rape" had even occurred. Yet, during the hearing of the Hamiltons' application to freeze her assets, her own counsel Hugh Tomlinson told the high court that "she does not claim to have any previous acquaintance with the Hamiltons", and that although she "genuinely believed" they were the couple who helped to rape her she now accepted that it was a case of mistaken identity.

This may be a desperate attempt to avoid being charged with wasting police time or attempting to pervert the course justice. But it also sits uneasily with Max's account of his dealings with Milroy-Sloan.

If nothing else, might this sleazy saga make the media slightly more sceptical and less starry-eyed about Max Clifford? For it is newspapers and TV who have elevated him to the role of superstar PR guru, thus guaranteeing him a steady stream of clients with "scandals" to sell – and in turn reinforcing his power and influence over editors.

"This teacher shortage is getting serious"

How Journalism Works Pt. 94

"ASYLUM-SEEKER'S £6,000 stay at a luxury hotel", screamed the *Sun* headline in a classic of its kind, accompanied by the sub-head "– and guess what, you're footing the bill, folks..."

Hacks James Clench and Duncan Larcombe then told, across two pages, the "story" of Mohamed Faqey, a disabled Lebanese man who had spent nine weeks in a £99 room at the Thistle Kensington Gardens hotel near Hyde Park.

"It's not bad, but it's not perfect," the *Sun* quoted Mr Faqey as "moaning", before listing the hotel's facilities – as if the wheelchair-bound former English teacher was down in the "smart lounge bar filled with exotic plants and marble busts" every night before repairing to his "luxury air-conditioned room" to watch the wide-screen TV and have a chuckle at the gullibility of the British taxpayer – rather than subsisting on cold food bought from Kwiksave with his asylum-seeker's miserable ration of vouchers.

The following day Graham Keeley of the *Daily Mail* joined in, again emphasising the supposedly luxurious nature of the room and the refugee's alleged ingratitude: "Mr Faqey... is far from delighted with his stay."

The tabloids, particularly the *Sun*, were far less interested in how Mr Faqey, 35, came to be there. A lecturer from Tyre, he had been abducted and tortured in 1992 by Lebanese militiamen, causing the injuries that keep him in a wheelchair. After several years in hiding in Lebanon he escaped to Britain, arriving in April last year, and claimed asylum. At first he was accommodated in a grim B&B where he had to crawl up and down stairs to use the lavatory. After the B&B was closed down on health and safety grounds, Westminster council put him in the Thistle because it had no other suitable accommodation for such a severely disabled man. The home office has rejected his application for asylum, even though it does not dispute his story of abduction and beatings, and he is now appealing.

As Mr Faqey told the *Sun* and the *Mail*, he has no desire to live in a Kensington hotel – not because it isn't "luxurious" enough, but because a simple room with wheelchair access where he could care for himself is all he needs to maintain his dignity.

The gullible party in this story, of course, is not the British taxpayer but the refugee who believed that by speaking to the "journalists" of the *Sun* and the *Mail* he might help his case to be allowed to stay in Britain, little realising that these hacks knew exactly what they intended to write before even meeting him, having been tipped off, probably by an employee of Westminster city council or the hotel.

Oddly, both the *Sun* and *Mail* failed to write a follow-up about the direct consequences of their "reporting". After the stories appeared on 20 and 21 August, Mr Faqey started to receive racist phone calls in his room from *Sun* and *Mail* readers, and was spat at in the street outside the hotel.

After a couple of days of this, Westminster council, stung by the publicity from the tabloids – the *Sun* wound up local residents to complain about high council tax and the fact that it cared for "Johnny Foreigner" more than the "ordinary man in the street" – moved him to a residential home in St John's Wood, intended for people with severe mental as well as physical disabilities. All his independence was taken away – even the miserable vouchers, because meals were provided. A teetotaller, he was accused of being drunk, because he has a slight speech impediment. He was unable to come or go as he pleased. When he complained about his treatment, he was told to leave.

Westminster tried to get shot of him altogether by passing responsibility for his care to the National Asylum Support Service. When it could not take him, the council offered him a hotel room near Heathrow – miles from his legal advisers and the doctors at St Mary's hospital, Paddington, who are treating him for his disabilities and related conditions.

Mr Faqey's supporters at Westminster Action Network on Disability say Westminster then suggested he had made himself homeless and initially refused to look for other accommodation. Westminster denies the claim, saying it has found him a roof over his head. But not until after he had spent a few hours in his wheelchair on the streets.

Westminster says Mr Faqey's plight highlights the lack of suitable accommodation in London and the need for an adequate dispersal scheme for asylum-seekers. What it also highlights is the callous attitude of the British authorities to people who have genuinely fled for their lives from oppression – and, of course, just how low the *Sun* and *Mail* are prepared to go.

FOLLOWING his recent high court defeat at the hands of Conrad Black, Richard "Dirty" Desmond is preparing for another legal bombardment – this time from milord Hollick, the man who sold him the *Sexpress* last year.

Hollick is Dirty Des's landlord at the Grey Lubyanka, and has become increasingly irked by the pornographer's reluctance to pay his bills. A few weeks ago he issued a final ultimatum, which Desmond ignored. So now he has issued a high court writ demanding £239,000 in unpaid bills, plus interest and costs.

Behind Dirty Des's unwillingness to hand over the money is a tragic tale of hygiene and hubris. It seems Desmond wants to install a private bathroom next to his office – but the landlord won't let him. Until Hollick relents, Desmond will continue his go-slow on paying service charges.

He has also opened a second front by encouraging his editors at attack the former proprietor. Hence the appearance of a piece in the *Sunday Express* two weeks ago deriding Hollick as "the one-time media baron turned estates manager". Desmond has also ordained that Hollick should always be described as "the bearded Labour peer", apparently in the belief that this is a great insult. Has Dirty Des forgotten that he himself sported a beard until a few years ago?

DAILY *Express* hack Danny Scott may soon be seeking employment elsewhere following the brainstorm that seized him last week while writing a feature about the new ITV series *Rich and Famous*.

"This is the age of dirt-cheap celebrity," he lamented. "We want gossip, we want to know where the stars go on holiday... It's all a bit sad, really." He was scathing about the appetite for every trivial detail of celebrities' lives — "from where they buy their toiletries to whether they still use the fondue set that Elton got them last Christmas".

At the last minute, someone at the *Express* appears to have noticed that this is precisely the kind of tripe served up in *OK!* magazine (prop. R. Desmond). An extra sentence hastily added that "most of these exciting stories appear in the celebrity magazines and we love to read them!" Whether this will be enough to save Scott from the wrath of Dirty Desmond remains to be seen.

THE competition is hotting up between the *Mirror's* pisspoor showbiz columnists, the 3am girls, and their new rivals on Richard Desmond's *Daily Star*, the three "Bitches".

On Wednesday 29 August both columns reported Lord Snowdon's comment that R&B singer Macy Gray is the rudest woman he has met in 55 years in the business. While it was clear that 3am had lifted their quotes straight from Chrissy Iley's interview with Gray published in the *Sunday Times* three day's earlier, the hapless Bitches described the source of their story as "US reports".

Reading British broadsheets is apparently beyond the capacity of Desmond's girls, who instead lifted their story second-hand from the web site of the *New York Post*.

Glasgow pupils in class choas

Scotsman

ANOTHER triumph for Jason Lewis, the "chief investigative reporter" for the *Mail on Sunday*.

"The full extent to which sacked Iain Duncan Smith supporter Edgar Griffin is linked to Fascist groups can be revealed today," he reported sensationally on 26 August. "The 79-year-old, who was a vice-chairman of Mr Duncan Smith's campaign to become Tory leader, has worked for two convicted Italian Fascists with links to a terrorist bombing campaign. The *Mail on Sunday* can disclose..."

And so the story rushed excitably on, peppered with phrases such as "now the *Mail on Sunday* can expose..."

A great scoop, of course, unless one happened to have read a lengthy article by Kevin Toolis, which also revealed Edgar Griffin's dealings with the two Italians. It was published in the *Guardian* on 20 May 2000.

SPOT THE BALLS

USING your skill and judgement, guess the name of which tabloid newspaper the Mirror has removed from the advert at the back of this picture of Michael Owen's third goal?

THE strain of trying to stem losses of £2m a week at ft.com seems to have affecting the legendary cost-cutting skills of *Financial Times* chief executive Stephen "Slasher" Hill.

After a wave of Hill-inflicted redundancies in 1998 one of the *FT*'s London outposts, a six-storey building at Greystoke Place, Fetter Lane, became surplus to requirements. The Slasher budgeted to sublet the offices at a significant profit, since at that time bankers and lawyers and accountants were desperate for space in the Holborn area.

Alas! The local managers were among the staff sacked, and the issue was overlooked until a few months ago when Hill's bean-counters pointed out that the bill for rent and rates since Greystoke Place became vacant had topped £1m. With only six months left on the lease, and the City laying off staff in their thousands, there are no takers for the building. And, to add insult to injury, it is now in such an appalling state that the landlords have submitted a bill for £1.5m for "dilapidations".

Hill reacted to the fiasco in the only way he knows how – by ordering yet another batch of redundancies at ft.com and extending the recruiting freeze at the *Financial Times*.

HACKWATCH

Spice Filler

AMAZING but true: during the month of August, the British national press carried more than 450 stories about Victoria Beckham, aka Posh Spice. Here's a mere handful from the past fortnight alone:

16 August: Grave news from the *Daily Mirror*: "Sophie Ellis Bextor tried to patch up her feud with Victoria Beckham when they both appeared on *Top of the Pops* last week but received the cold shoulder. She has tried before. "I saw Victoria a few months ago and thought it would be fun to laugh about the whole thing. But her people said she didn't want to talk to me.'"

17 August: The feud between Victoria Beckham and Sophie Ellis Bextor is over, the *Sun* claims. While recording a TV show a few weeks ago, Sophie reveals, "Victoria was two dressing rooms away so I went and said hello... We were both polite and she was very nice to me."

19 August: In a long interview with the *Observer*, Emma Bunton denies rumours of a rift within the Spice Girls. "I'm always on the phone to Victoria," she says. "We're more than friends, we're like sisters." Meanwhile, the *Sunday People* exclusively informs that nation that Victoria has had her bust surgically enhanced. Not to be outdone, the *Sunday Mirror* reveals that when Victoria is relaxing at home she sometimes wears a towelling dressing gown or a tracksuit.

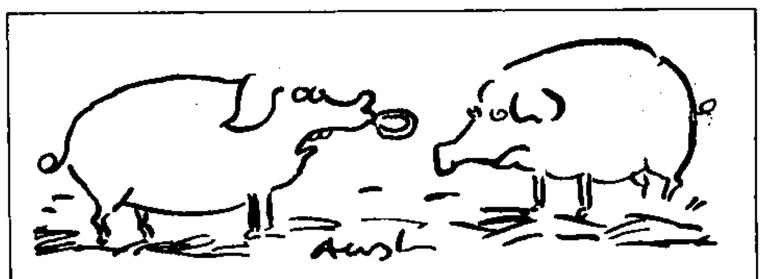
20 August: Fears are growing, the *Sun* reports, that the Spice Girls may never perform together again. Asked about their future plans, Victoria Beckham replies: "We don't know... We all want to explore different avenues."

22 August: The *Daily Mirror* discloses that the Spice Girls are organising "a jolly reunion to catch up with each other's gossip" – but haven't invited Posh. "Victoria will be devastated to read this – she has no idea about the secret meeting next month," it reports. Over in the ever-groovy *Financial Times*, Professor John Kay broods on the new world order: "Corporations have power in our society, as does Posh Spice. Is it a cause for concern?"

24 August: The *Sun*'s Dominic Mohan reveals that Victoria Beckham "is furious with ex-Spice Girl Geri [Halliwell] for using the same Lara Croft video concept as her".

25 August: The *Daily Express*, which has run countless reverential pieces about Victoria since her mate Richard Desmond took over the paper, kicks off an "explosive" new series about the star. "Victoria Beckham is one of the most ruthlessly ambitious women in Britain," *Express* hackette Virginia Blackburn writes. "Ever since she was a child, she's known what she wanted and she's got it – with no thought for the people who have stood in her way. Victoria is an average-looking woman with an undistinguished singing voice..." Shome mishtake? Not at all: Dirty Desmond was furious to learn that Victoria – whom he regarded as his private property – has sold the serial rights in her autobiography to the *Daily Mail* and *Hello!* magazine for £900,000, and he is now taking revenge. *Express* hacks, who were previously banned from using the nickname "Posh", are now sent a memo saying that they can call her whatever they like.

26 August: "Today the *News of the World* can reveal the true story of Victoria Beckham that, until now, only her closest friends have known." The astounding truth is that she can't stand Geri Halliwell – a secret known only to anyone who has glanced at a tabloid in the past couple of years. According to the *Screws*, Victoria complained to a pal that Halliwell "will do anything to get publicity. Geri doesn't care what she does as long as she gets in the paper. She's obviously trying to further her career and doesn't care how she does it." There's an equally startling revelation in the *Sunday People*: at England's football match against Germany next weekend, "Victoria could be singled out for abuse from Germany's fans". A source close to the Football Association tells the *People*: "There are a lot of sick people out there." Victoria is said to be "stunned" by the news.



"It's a fake"

27 August: "Pouting Posh Spice has got it all wrong. A simple smile is the best way to win friends and influence people, a new survey has found." Thus begins a news story in the *Times*. In the more upmarket *Daily Mirror*, the 3AM girls are worried. "Is the strain of carving out a solo singing career getting to Victoria Beckham?" they ask anxiously.

28 August: Victoria Beckham confesses to the *Sun* that her new pierced lip "hurts like hell". Posh, 27, is speaking just before appearing at a Birmingham concert which also features her arch-rivals Geri Halliwell and Sophie Ellis Bextor. Alas, two minutes into the show her microphone headset falls off but the singing carries on – revealing that she has been miming. According to the *Sun*'s lengthy report, Posh "expressed sadness that hubby David and son Brooklyn, two, were not there to see her".

29 August: Thirteen new cases of foot-and-mouth have been confirmed in Northumbria – but there's no space for such trifles on most front pages, which are cleared for more sensational tidings. "Posh Spice admitted yesterday her 'pierced' lip ring is a fake," the *Mirror* reveals. A long feature in the *Daily Mail*, replete with quotes from child psychologists and dentists, accuses Posh of "setting her fans a bad example". The serious-minded *Guardian* contents itself with a 400-word news story on page 5 plus a lengthy G2 feature ("Leave It Out, Posh") which loftily advises Mrs Beckham that "piercings, real or not, just aren't dangerous any more – they're deeply naff".

30 August: A lengthy why-oh-why piece by Natasha Walter in the *Independent* points out that it's more than five years since the Spice Girls' heyday. "Even though the charts are immune to their presence, the attention given to them shows no signs of dying down," she grumbles. "Isn't it time to call a halt?"

Fat chance: Victoria's memoirs, *Learning to Fly*, are being serialised in the *Mail* all this week. Oh, and she has a new single out. Readers of a sensitive disposition are advised to cancel their newspaper orders at once.

THE imagination of the *Daily Mail's* veteran diarist Nigel Dempster grows more lurid.

The Dumpster recently regaled readers with an account of Sir Elton John's visit to an "out-of-the-way Nice restaurant called Albert's Bar" where he allegedly "had his table bedecked with pink flowers before he took his seat". As if this outrageous behaviour were not enough, the Dumpster added that the impromptu floral arrangement "sadly, clashed horribly with the flowers in his lime suit and huge lime-tinted glasses".

The accusation of such a crime against fashion was too much for Sir Elton to bear, and he immediately instructed his manager, Frank Presland, to respond to the Dumpster's "fictitious little piece". "It is conceivable that 'Albert's Bar' exists in some out of the way corner of Nice," wrote Presland, "but sadly Elton John has never heard of the establishment, still less has he visited it." Then on to more important matters: "Of course we couldn't say Elton John never wears lime green, but it is the case that the lime green suit and matching sunglasses have not featured in his wardrobe this summer."

THE TUC CONFERENCE

AS the brothers and sisters prepare to gather in Brighton for the annual Trades Union Congress, general-secretary John Monks is making last minute attempts to forge a united front against government plans to extend the role of the private sector into education and health.

But could the united might of public sector workers' union, Unison, the T&G and the increasingly Bolshie GMB led by John Edmonds be derailed by Sir Ken Jackson and the engineering union, the AEEU?

This is the fear of the TUC high command, which wants a clear message to be sent to the Dear Leader before he delivers his TUC speech on the Tuesday of conference. Alarmingly, however, the AEEU is giving every impression of supporting the government's privatisation drive, thus allowing for the possibility that the comrades will be presented with two contradictory resolutions on privatisation. Strenuous efforts are being made to persuade Sir Ken to change the habit of a lifetime and "button it".

THE BIG MAC LABOUR CONFERENCE

THE row over McDonald's sponsorship of the Labour leader's conference reception has not prevented the London region of the Labour party leaping aboard the corporate bandwagon.

"Tickets can be purchased on either an individual basis or per table – with the opportunity of acquiring a silver or gold table," says the blurb on a letter to unsuspecting party members. "I do hope you will be able to join us for what promises to be a relaxing evening with friends, supporters – and business colleagues – from across London."

Treble Big Macs all round...

LEADING Labour figures will show their support for the break-up of the post office when they stand on a platform paid for by the private post operator DHL at the party conference.

Two ministers, Stephen Byers and Robin Cook, and leading Scottish minister Wendy Alexander will speak on "The Good State" at a DHL-sponsored fringe meeting organised by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), the pro-privatisation think-tank, on conference Tuesday.

DHL, owned by the German post office, is lobbying hard to cherry pick the post office's lucrative routes and services, leaving the uneconomic "universal" deliveries in the public sector. None of the ministers has direct responsibility for the post office, but securing two cabinet level big hitters is a coup for DHL, and Wendy Alexander's brother, Douglas Alexander, is the trade department minister in charge of postal services.

The post office currently has a monopoly on delivering mail costing less than £1 or weighs less than 350g. But Labour's creation of "Consignia plc" prepares the way to abandon the monopoly and make the post office compete in all areas with firms like DHL and Labour funder UPS.

DHL also hopes to break open post office monopolies worldwide by using the general agreement on trade in services (GATS), an international trade treaty supported by Labour. Under GATS the World Trade Organisation (WTO) could force signatory countries to put public services out to private competition.

TWO ministers, the newly imposed "party chairman" Charles Clarke and culture secretary Tessa Jowell, will both speak for IPPR on "The Good Society" on conference Monday, sponsored by Provident Financial.

Like Labour, Provident Financial has an interest in Britain's poor; but the firm certainly doesn't want to see poor people abolished. Indeed, it specialises in lending money to them, making £160m yearly profits by lending to low income borrowers who can't get credit from regular banks.

The firm's door-to-door money-lenders charge interest sometimes equivalent to 160 percent APR. Campaigners from Church Action on Poverty were so angry about Provident Financial preying on poor people, they successfully campaigned for the Church of England to get rid of its shares in the firm. Though the CofE might keep the firm at arm's length, Labour thinks they are just the people to help build "The Good Society".

THE Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has secured corporate sponsorship too for an "oscars and turkeys" election awards ceremony it is organising during conference.

Stephen Fry will host the reception for "delegates, MPs, special advisers and hacks"; but among the awards for the "cheesiest moment" and "worst gaffe", it is unlikely Fry will mention the way private finance initiative (PFI) schemes started falling apart at precisely the time Tony Blair announced that Labour would be increasing the number of PFI-style privatisations.

With exquisite timing the £319m "Libra" PFI project to computerise courts was "postponed indefinitely" just as the prime minister celebrated the "dynamism" of the private sector. "Libra" was run by ICL, a subsidiary of Fujitsu. Funnily enough, IPPR's "Oscars and Turkeys" awards are being sponsored by... ICL, a subsidiary of Fujitsu!

THE influential New Local Government Network (NLGN) is also running a corporate-sponsored fringe meeting on conference Monday when schools minister Stephen Timms will speak on "PPPs in education: Is this the future?" (Though why they bother with the question mark is a mystery.)

Timms is speaking on a platform "in association with" the privatiser Amey, which also funds the NLGN itself, and will be joined on the platform by Amey's "education managing director" David McGahey, former director of education at Buckinghamshire county council.

The meeting will give Timms a chance to explain why every part of Amey's £192m PPP scheme in Glasgow Schools is designed to increase the firm's profits at the cost of pupils' education. Under the scheme 29 secondary schools will almost all lose one of their two games halls and eight school swimming pools will shut. The number of classrooms is shrinking; the 1,200 pupil-Shawlands Academy will lose fourteen classrooms; Glasgow teachers are losing their form rooms. Etc, etc.

Timms can also explain why head teachers and school boards were not allowed to discuss the design of the new schools, and why the heads had to sign "confidentiality clauses" with Amey before even being allowed to see the plans. Timms can tell conference why five of the schools were not ready to open when term began on 22 August and why one had to close almost immediately; and why the health and safety executive (HSE) had to stop the contractor storing calor gas bottles in a school entrance.

Most of all Timms can tell the Labour conference why PPPs put David McGahey's boss, the former Tory education secretary and now Amey board member John Patten, in charge of schools from Glasgow to Waltham Forest.

U-TURN ON GAYS AND CANNABIS

TORY LOSERSHIP CONTEST

ONE of the most delightful sideshows of the Tory leadership race has been the return to the public arena of John Major.

After slamming his predecessor Margaret Thatcher for interfering in the Tory party during his term of office, Major was tempted by John Humphrys of Radio 4's *Today* programme into a remarkable outburst about the Scott report on the sale of arms to the detested regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

On the subject of sleaze, Major burst out: "We took the heat for it in the 1990s. The arms-for-Iraq issue which caused so much trouble arose in the 1980s, and only became public in the 1990s." The implication was plain. The arms-for-Iraq scandal had been caused by nasty Margaret Thatcher while poor old John Major had to take the blame for it.

Attentive *Eye* readers will recall our four-page round-up of the Scott report in February 1996 (892), notably the piece entitled MAJOR'S BIG BUNG FOR SADDAM. This referred to a massive subsidy for Iraqi defence equipment by the British government. In 1988, after the ceasefire between Iran and Iraq, new credits were extended to Iraq by the export credits guarantee department (ie taxpayers).

Up to 20 percent of these credits would be guaranteed to suppliers of "defence equipment". A note from the treasury civil servant P. Mountfield to his bosses warned that in 1989 the proposed new credits would guarantee no less than £200m to anyone who sold defence equipment to Saddam – a 100 percent increase on previous years. The Scott report revealed: "The chief secretary to the treasury endorsed the proposed new offer."

Tactfully, Sir Richard Scott did not disclose the name of the chief secretary responsible for this burst of generosity to the dictator... one John Major.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

IN THE increasingly unlikely event that Ken Clarke becomes the next leader of the Tory party, Europe is not the only issue he will try to fudge, judging by a recent speech he gave in Truro.

"I think Cornwall should be a Conservative county, it was a Conservative county," Mr Clarke told Radio Cornwall on 23 August. "We have always had trouble with the Liberal Democrats down here. It's a two party race in most places although the Labour party used to have Falmouth years and years ago – still have I am being reminded by my neighbour – er, but basically it's right of centre, but it's not too right wing, people down here actually have quite liberal views." Er, yes, Ken.

SUPPOSE Iain Duncan Smith wins the Tory leadership. Then suppose (difficult though it is) he becomes prime minister and has his finger on the nuclear button. At what point would he press it?

Smith dealt with this during a little-noticed parliamentary debate in 1994 on nuclear escalation. "I have yet to hear any spokesman deal with the problem of what a country should do when it knows that an unstable regime is about to possess nuclear capability, or is capable of making a threat," he thundered. "If a country in those circumstances has nuclear weapons, should it make some form of pre-emptive strike?... We must consider whether we would go all the way and use nuclear weapons. Labour have yet to answer such questions."

And what was Duncan Smith's answer? "The possession of such weapons is of no use unless we have the will to use them." In short, if the Tories do ever return to government, Duncan Smith will launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike against "rogue states" such as North Korea and Iraq.

It seems doubtful, however, that this would go down awfully well with his friends in the Bush administration — not least because it would remove their sole justification for spending billions of dollars on the ballistic missile defence system, and thus infuriate the large defence companies who gave so generously to George W. Bush's election campaign and are now expecting a hefty payback.

THOSE who served at the Guards depot in Pirbright, Surrey, in 1974 recall a certain Lance-Corporal I. Duncan Smith of No 8 Scots Guards training company, who spent many months in residence. But there is no mention of it in the official biography on his website.

Normal officer recruits are at Pirbright (in the so-called "brigade squad") for only 10 weeks before passing on to their battalions. Other ranks remain for 22 weeks. A ministry of defence spokesman told the *Eye* that there are only two reasons potential officers would stay any longer. Either because "they have foreign passports" (which doesn't apply to Duncan Smith), or "because they failed their RCB [Regular Commissions Board] selection board test, or were deemed not yet ready for the RCB and needed extra training".

Did this happen to Duncan Smith? Unfortunately the Pirbright records for the relevant period seem to have gone astray during a reorganisation 10 years ago, so the MoD was unable to say. When we tried to ask the candidate himself for further details, a surly press officer in his campaign office put the phone down on us.

Why so bashful? If "Smithy" wishes to sell himself as a man of the people, the story of his illustrious service in the ranks as a humble lance-corporal would surely enhance his carefully spun CV.

IT'S THE SUN WHAT WON IT!

"IAIN Duncan Smith is emerging as a politician of real substance," a *Sun* editorial declared last week, praising him as a "master strategist" and "tough cookie" who could save the Tory party. "We've always rated Duncan Smith," it boasted.

Always, eh? As in its editorial of 18 June, perhaps, which argued that he had no hope of becoming prime minister? "The best we can say of the likeable Duncan Smith," the *Sun* said then, "is we'd extend the same courtesies we did to William Hague." Coming from a newspaper which once denounced Hague on its front page as a dead parrot, this was scarcely a ringing endorsement. Nor was its editorial on 28 June: "Clarke is pro-euro, Portillo is disloyal – and his friends are a nightmare – and Duncan Smith is unknown. And that's just for starters... As things stand, we're not backing anybody."

By 6 July, the *Sun* was still keeping its high opinion of IDS well hidden. In an editorial headed "The Losers", it anonounced: "We've heard from all five contenders for the Tory leadership. And yesterday the nominations closed for the top job. Excuse us while we snore... All five articles submitted by the contenders — and published by the *Sun* — made disappointing reading. In all honesty, these Tory pretenders are uninspiring." On 10 July it warned that "Kenneth Clarke and Iain Duncan Smith would each divide, rather than unite, the party because of their deeply-held, opposing views on Europe."

In its leader last week, the *Sun* complained that "the political establishment have underestimated Duncan Smith". Unlike the Wapping establishment, of course.

'Backbiter'

MORTUARY UPDATE

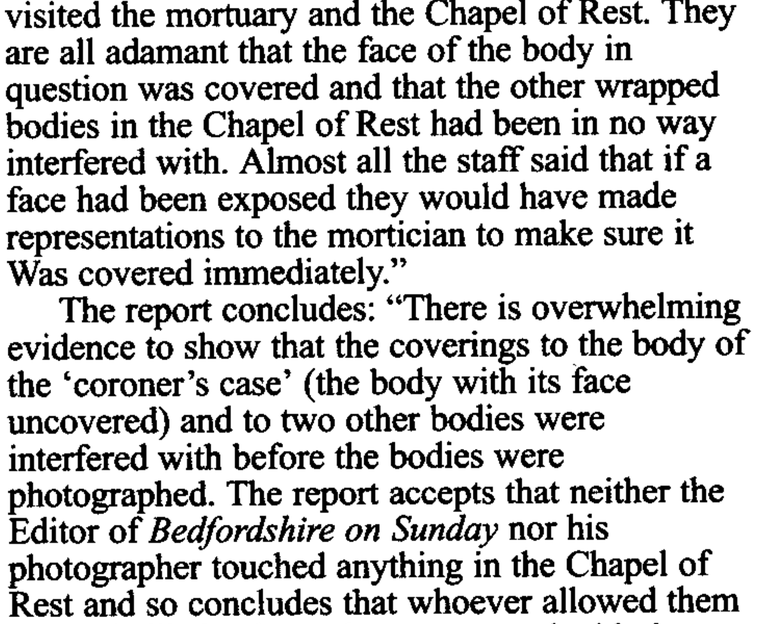
THE editor of *Bedfordshire on Sunday*, Steve Lowe, has written to the *Eye* refuting our assertion that the bodies photographed in a makeshift mortuary in the Chapel of Rest at Bedford Hospital in January were tampered with (see *Eyes passim*).

The picture of the bodies, one with its face uncovered making it identifiable, appeared first in the *Bedfordshire on Sunday*, before being splashed across the national press. Mr Lowe writes: "The evidence by Ralph Miller does not confirm the bodies were tampered with, by someone who was angry with the hospital, or anyone else. The evidence is no more than recollections of managers who happened to be passing the room on the day in question... Of course the hospital management are looking to blame anyone but themselves and are saying the bodies are tampered with. They would, wouldn't they?"

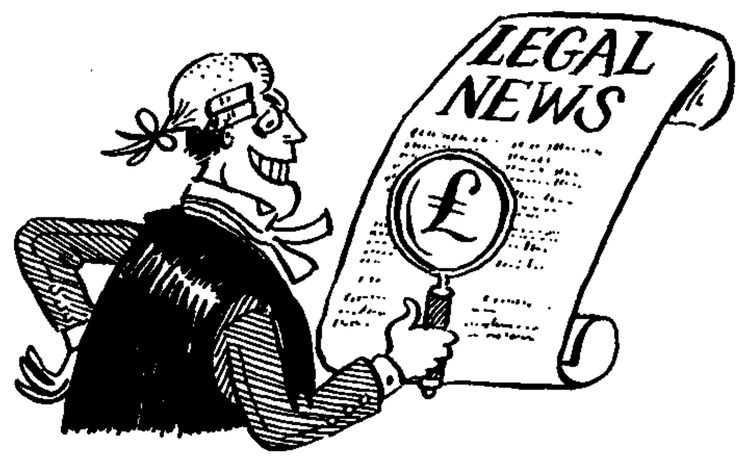
Just for the record then, here are the findings of Ralph Miller, a retired police officer, not a member of Bedford Hospital management who was commissioned to investigate breaches of security at the hospital by the Bedford coroner. Miller states: "During Tuesday 9 January and Thursday 11 January, a number of hospital staff visited the mortuary and the Chapel of Rest. They are all adamant that the face of the body in question was covered and that the other wrapped bodies in the Chapel of Rest had been in no way interfered with. Almost all the staff said that if a face had been exposed they would have made representations to the mortician to make sure it Was covered immediately."

The report concludes: "There is overwhelming evidence to show that the coverings to the body of the 'coroner's case' (the body with its face uncovered) and to two other bodies were interfered with before the bodies were photographed. The report accepts that neither the Editor of *Bedfordshire on Sunday* nor his photographer touched anything in the Chapel of Rest and so concludes that whoever allowed them access is likely also to have tampered with the coverings before the press entered."

Of course Steve Lowe is keen to stress that the photograph which appeared in his paper is entirely genuine, but then he would be, wouldn't he?



"Not exactly a complicated divorce"



RUSSELL Jones & Walker, the prominent firm of London solicitors, boasts on its website about its "highly-regarded defamation unit", whose outstanding quality is its "unique rapid response to ensure that a potential claim is dealt with as efficiently as possible".

A case not mentioned on the website, however, is the recent libel action taken by two Lincolnshire police officers against the *Oldie* magazine. So unique and rapid was the response of the officers' solicitors, Russell Jones & Walker, that it took almost a year for them to issue a writ. They then had a further four months to serve the writ, but – uniquely and rapidly – they served it just before the four months deadline was up and on the wrong people.

To avoid the horror of the case being flung out for being out of time, the solicitors tried to keep the action going on the basis of the human rights act, arguing that the human rights of the officers to a proper trial were being infringed. This unique and rapid initiative met a unique and rapid end when the case was finally flung out by Mr Justice Gray, who ordered the Lincolnshire police to pay more than £6,000 in costs to the *Oldie*. To cap it all, the *Eye* now learns that the policemen are suing Russell Jones and Walker, alleging that they mishandled the case.

IN THE COURTS

WHEN the greater London magistrates courts authority (GLMCA) took over the running of the capital's magistrates courts from 22 separate committees in April, it soon realised it was sitting on a property goldmine.

Of 40 magistrates courts in greater London, 16 are in central London and 18 are pre-1950s buildings — ideal for turning into luxury flats. Keen to capitalise on this discovery as soon as possible, the GLMCA has published a "strategic consultation document" laying out its options. While the GLMCA has not reached a final decision, all its preferred options involve closure of a significant number of magistrates courts.

The GLMCA claims the money needed to maintain its properties over the next five years is so great – more than £12m – that it has been forced to consider whether it is making best use of them. "Through the sale or lease of some of our buildings, we could improve the working conditions for staff and the facilities and services offered to court users at the remaining sites," trumpets the consultation document, ignoring the fact that magistrates, court staff and services at sites which are for the chop might fare less well.

While the document promises that the GLMCA will "endeavour wherever possible to redirect resources rather than reduce them", it admits: "There may be situations whereby as a result of courthouse rationalisation, we are unable to accommodate an employee through redeployment and re-training. If that is so, and they cannot be accommodated internally, we will discuss the options with them. We are currently looking at the extent of these options which could include early retirements, redundancy etc."

Consultation lasts until 14 September, but some magistrates are so dismayed by the proposals, particularly that people will be forced to travel miles to the nearest court, they are considering resigning when the changes are implemented. Unfortunately this would probably play into the hands of the GLMCA which would welcome the chance to shed a few extra magistrates under its new slim-line regime.

EYE TV

TV's Best Ever Soap Moments (ITV1)

DAVID Liddiment, ITV controller of channels, received a generally ecstatic press for his McTaggart lecture at the Edinburgh television festival. He warned that "the soul of television is in danger" because of the BBC's emphasis on populist shows at the expense of public service programming.

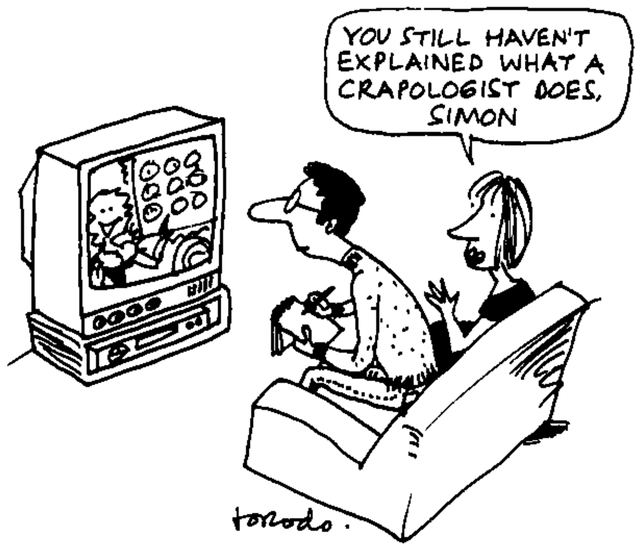
The media cheers which greeted his speech are largely explained by the fact that attacks on the BBC are the easiest television news story to write and are particularly welcomed by the Murdoch titles. Few commentators, however, examined in detail one of the key passages of the address. As well as attacking the BBC, Liddiment also roared that his own house was well in order.

"Look beyond the depressingly narrow perception of ITV pedalled by the broadsheets," he urged. "Past the views of opinion-formers who take pride in avoiding the channels everyone else watches, and you'll begin to see that there is risk-taking on ITV1."

An admirable challenge. But let's hope that if anyone decided last week to look beyond the depressingly narrow perceptions and the views of opinion formers, they didn't choose last Thursday night. For there at the heart of the schedules was TV's Best Ever Soap Moments, a show which might have been designed to reinforce the stereotype of what ITV does.

Liddiment's Edinburgh remarks specifically criticised the BBC for stretching EastEnders to four nights but, just a week after he spoke, he managed the improbable feat of putting EastEnders on ITV as a poll of viewers' best bits from the soaps inevitably included several moments from the Walford chronicles. Also, if you include the two showings of Crossroads and the Thursday Emmerdale, then the schedule of ITV1, as we are now asked to call it, included a total of three hours of soap opera new and old.

TV's Best Ever Soap Moments was clearly modelled on Channel 4's compilations of archive from the box but made the mistake of omitting the analysis and wit to be found in the best of those anthologies. Dale Winton, identifying himself as a "big soap fan", stood in various locations — outside the Rovers' Return, in Brookside Close, in Albert Square — and counted down the results of the viewer poll backwards from 20.



"TV soapland - we know it better than our own streets!" he unconvincingly declared.

The actors involved then recalled the circumstances of filming: "I left the studio floor and I were just crying." The actress who played the late Sue Sullivan in Brookside explained that the main acting temptation of the scene, in which she was pushed to her death from scaffolding, was to resist the temptation to look round before she plunged. You see, an actor doing a stunt knows they're going to fall but the character wouldn't. You suddenly understood why performing is such a difficult art.

There's always a terrible poignancy in these actor anecdote sequences because you realise the extent to which most actors who leave soaps just vanish. The ones whose characters had died seemed wholly broken; there was just a hint of optimism in those with the possibility of being written back in. Realising that the reminiscences of Equity members might not carry the programme, the producers had booked some would-be quirky witnesses. There was the man who drove the tram that killed Alan Bradley in Coronation Street and the bloke who played the foreman of the jury which convicted Deirdre Rachid's con-man lover.

Was this progamme "risk-taking" in the sense that Liddiment had promised ITV1 could be? Well, it risked boring the audience stiff. It risked making them think that stitched-together clips were being passed off as a documentary. Perhaps, most damagingly for Liddiment, what it most risked was making viewers try out BBC1 and Channel 4 as the extracts from EastEnders and Brookside rather outshone the scenes from Coronation Street and Emmerdale.

Liddiment did have a point in Edinburgh. It's shocking that BBC1 not only decided on a fourth weekly edition of EastEnders but then built an entire Friday night schedule around material related to Albert Square. But it isn't acceptable for ITV to suggest that rip-off rubbish like TV's Best Ever Soap Moments is okay on commercial television — because it's the kind of thing that ITV viewers and advertisers expect — but abhorrent when it comes from Television Centre.

ITV has done more than any other player to encourage the view in politics and the media that ratings are the only measure of success. Network Centre crowed over — and helped to point out to the press — BBC1's record low audience shares in recent years. Having escalated a ratings war, it's a bit rich to complain that the BBC has started firing back.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS

BBC-wallahs are exercised by the war to be fought over the corporation's proposed digital channels.

According to the Beeb, Britain has the fastest uptake of digital TV in Europe and the BBC will "die a slow death" if it isn't granted favoured status by the government to spend more licence-payers' money (£500m so far) to secure a piece of the digital action.

But it's a hard policy to justify – as Liddiment himself knows: Granada and Carlton have already wasted £800m on their own ITV digital ventures, with almost nothing to show for it.

Granada's Wellbeing channel is in deep do-do, as is Carlton Cinema. Why? Because nobody's watching. The Money Channel has gone, and so too has BskyB's Science channel. Carlton's recent coproduction with Sainsbury's, the Taste Network, was a disaster too. Number of pounds in presenter Anthea Turner's 12-month contract: 128,000. Number of viewers: 0.

As the BBC knows, pay-to-view niche broadcasting like this doesn't always work. Hence it wants to make its own digital channels, BBC3 and BBC4, free to view, with licence-payers subsidising the whole experiment. Why doesn't the BBC simply put BBC1 and BBC2 out on digital, alongside the analogue service we have now, and plough the money earmarked for BBC3 and BBC4 into programme-making? Because that's not "original" enough. According to the Beeb's rebuttal unit, digital technology will mean an increase in the "range and originality" of services. The example bandied about is *The Asian Network*, which is hoping to become "the only national radio station targeting an Asian audience". Great – but it's radio, not TV.

DUMB BRITAIN

DUMB AMERICA

Weakest Link USA, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Aristotle identified four elements. Which of these was denoted by the Greek prefix, "pyro"?

Contestant: Louis Armstrong.

Robinson: The Bible, the New Testament. The Four Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and...?

Contestant: (long pause) Joe?

Robinson: Which Egyptian actor starred in Lawrence of Arabia and also wrote a newspaper column on the subject of bridge?

Contestant: Naomi Campbell.

Robinson: Who led the victorious fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar?

Contestant: Horatio Hornblower.

GOING LIVE

ON 29 August the BBC *Six* went live to Ginny Stein of ABC for the latest on the Australian asylum-seekers story.

"It's quite late but the ship is still very visible," she said. Viewers had to take her word for it because she was speaking via telephone.

Bizarrely, on the same day the *Six* also went live to Robert Nesbit for the latest on news that "the south coast of England will be hit by a mega-tsunami". Behind him the English channel was Matthew Arnold calm. When could viewers expect the catastrophe? "In the next few centuries – don't cancel your holiday yet."

A FASCINATING document about "personifying BBC1" has reached the Eye, rescued from various coffee-stained tables on a late night train. It says alarming things about BBC1 controller Lorraine Heggessey's plans for the future of "her" channel.

Using fluent Birt speak, it first imagines what BBC1 would be like if it were a person. This "person" would apparently drive a Volvo, and its "treasured possession" would be a lawn mower or a Jubilee mug. It would have "tidy, anaglypta wall paper" on the wall and would be called "John Smith, Trevor or Norman". Its favourite food would be "meat and two veg". At school BBC1 would have been "plain but popular" and would have "grassed on the smokers".

Next follows Heggessey's prescription for reviving the channel: "You can't measure by ratings alone. I have to dare to be different," it says in big type. However, ratings clearly *do* matter as the paper soon adds: "A four million audience is not good enough. A handful of ITV products did hammer us."

These ITV "products" — what the rest of us call programmes — turn out to be soaps and Saturday peak-time shows. So what is to be done?

"I want populist programmes," demands Heggessey. After all, in the north "softer material plays well" and in the "English regions" the recommendation is no less than "serious docs to BBC 4", the Beeb's planned (but not yet approved) digital offering.

The overall "ambition" is for BBC1 "to be an *entertainment* led channel". Beside this someone has scribbled the word "aargh!"

DISTURBING research from focus groups has forced BBC News to change the style adopted by correspondents giving pieces to camera. Viewers think they have authority but find them a bit "cold" and "distant", apparently.

Editors, therefore, have told them to loosen up a little — hence reporter Pallab Ghosh's permanent, village-idiot grin and Uncle George Allegiah's reassuring smile before he cues up the latest atrocity or famine package.

JUST FANCY THAT!

Well, I don't imagine anyone will be surprised to learn that the fourth series of *Absolutely Fabulous*, starting tonight, is awful. Generally when an artist vows to "quit at the peak", doesn't hit the heights with new solo ventures, and revives her masterwork after a half-decade of lunching, then it tends to be as poor, tatty and frayed as *Absolutely Fabulous* has now become.

I find it hard to convey in words just how dismal the new series is.

– **Caitlin Moran, *The Times* p. 8**

Unless you have had one of those fiendish anti-wrinkle injections that Patsy goes in for these days, it would be hard not to watch this without grinning from ear to ear all the way through and frequently laughing out loud...

... It is *very, very* funny – as good as a bottle of very cold wine on a very hot day.

– **David Chater, *The Times* p. 36**

THE BBC's "Beyond 2000" manifesto states that as part of the drive to achieve 20 percent efficiencies by 2003, the "significant opportunities" provided by digital technology should be exploited, including: "Light-weight digital cameras and simple desk-top editing, allowing production teams to shoot and edit their own material."

This new technology is now being introduced with the help of the "guru of video journalism", Michael Rosenblum, who has pioneered the craft in the US. BBC Regions are being encouraged to send volunteers to attend Rosenblum's three-week courses on how to shoot and edit film digitally, hence cutting out cameramen and editors in one fell swoop.

This is not the first time this brilliant new cost-cutting technology has been introduced to Britain. In 1994 Associated Newspapers, owner of the *Daily Mail*, launched Channel One, a 24-hour news channel for London manned by 29 video journalists trained by Rosenblum. Channel One was a spectacular failure, finally closing up shop in 1998, and insiders believe that digital video journalism at the Beeb will suffer the same fate – but not before a tidy sum of licence-payers' money has found its way into the pocket of the visionary Mr Rosenblum.

"Actually, it was *the children we want you to rid us of"*

Plugged In

TONY Blair yesterday revealed he is addicted to TV's The Simpsons.

The PM told medics he loved the cult cartoon – screened on Sky One – after seeing a joke X-ray of Homer on a wall.

News of the World

Nominated by Francis Harvey.

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Prince Harry Enfield

A REPORT into television travel shows commissioned by the Voluntary Service Overseas and the campaign group Tourism Concern has described the ITV travel show *Wish You Were Here* as "tired and traditional".

This will surely be welcome news to Consignia, the trendy new company formerly known as the post office, which has aimed to strengthen its brand by sponsoring *Wish You Were Here* since the start of the year.

BBC
ARE RECORDING:

"ONE MAN & HIS DOG"
in Chatsworth Park
between 10.00 am and 5.30 pm
on Mon 27th & Tues 28th August 2001

ALL WELCOME!

Due to Foot & Mouth – no dogs please
Follow signs to the location

BBC poster, Pilsley

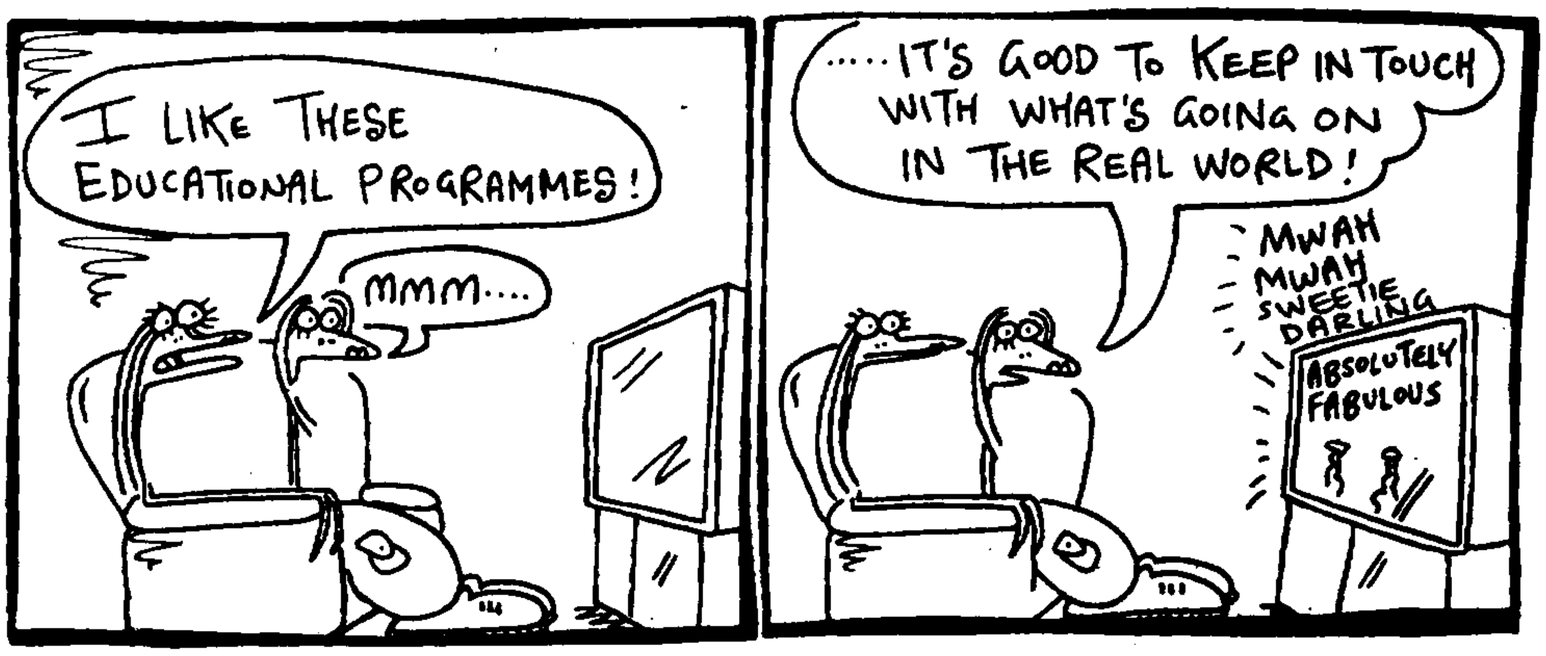
ON THE BOARDS

UNDER director Adrian Noble's controversial plans to radically overhaul the Royal Shakespeare Company, more than 100 technicians will be made redundant while those who remain will be forced on to unfavourable short-term contracts.

RSC management has escaped the cull entirely, however, with 10 jobs about to be advertised in the company's development department, including three new fund-raising posts.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


I LIKE THESE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES!
MMM....
.....IT'S GOOD TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE REAL WORLD!
MWAH MWAH SWEETIE DARLING
ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS

DOWN ON THE FARM

FOR a glimpse of the contempt in which farmers are now held not only by ministers and politicians in general but even by their own supposed "leaders", one couldn't have done better than attend a recent gathering in Shepton Mallet.

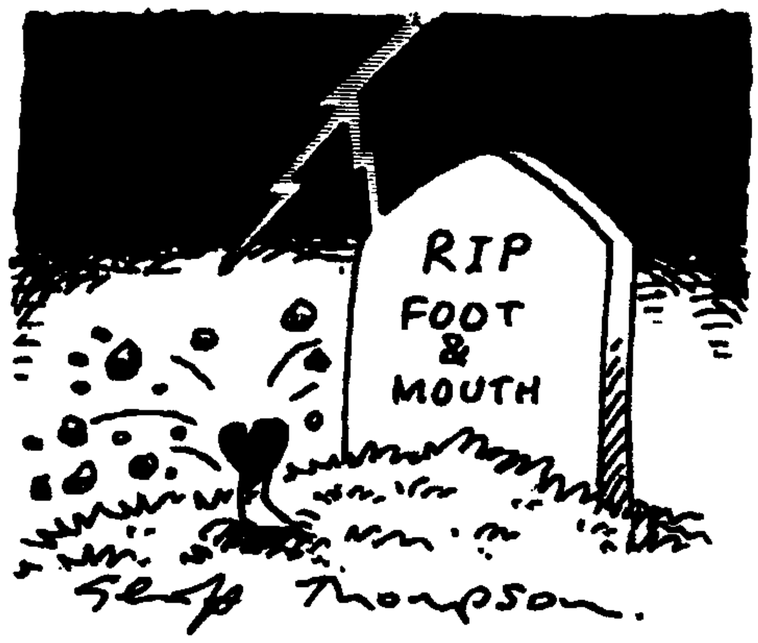
Several hundred West Country farmers crammed into a tent to hear "rural affairs minister" Lord Whitty laying out our government's view on "the future of farming", attended by NFU president Ben Gill and a local MEP. For two hours the hungry sheep looked up, and were fed not just a feast of platitudes but a diet of plain lies.

As proof that the government is not planning to destroy what remains of British agriculture, the noble lord offered as fact a boast that it had already spent "£3bn through the rural development programme". This was such a barefaced fib he was lucky none of his audience was familiar enough with the facts to get up and lynch him.

What Lord Shitty did not explain was that the "rural development fund" is nothing to do with "new" Labour but is a European union (EU) subsidy scheme. Far from having already spent "£3bn", Labour is committed only to spending £1.6bn over seven years, most of it still to come. And, thirdly, Britain is claiming proportionately a far lower percentage of this fund for her farmers than any other country in the EU.

The French are claiming £1.2bn every year for seven years. And if British farmers were getting as much as their Irish counterparts, they would be getting not £1.6bn but £14bn.

Whatever may be thought of subsidies, the point is that British farmers get far less of them than the continental and Irish farmers with whom they are forced to compete in the same market place. And the blame for this rests not on Brussels but squarely on the British government, which puts in for as little of these funds as it thinks it can get away with. This is because, thanks to the small print of Mrs Thatcher's famous EU budget rebate, for every pound it gets back from Brussels, chancellor Gordon Brown has to top up with four



more from the British taxpayer.

When Whitty had uttered enough untruths for one day, light relief was offered by Tory MEP Neil Parrish. His grasp of the facts was demonstrated by his claim that the EU's agricultural budget is £48bn (last year it was around £28bn) and that EU subsidies to southern European tobacco farmers are £700,000 a year. They are in fact currently running at around £600m a year, putting Mr Parrish's degree of error at around 85,000 percent.

As for "farmers' leader" Ben Gill, the less said about his smoothly-polished vacuities the better. With foot-and-mouth again rampant in Northumberland, it seems less likely than ever the epidemic will be over this year. The chances of getting back that coveted "export status" within 12 months are thus now virtually nil, whereas if we had gone for mass-vaccination in March we could again be exporting meat in only nine months' time.

And who was it more than anyone else who stopped that? Mr Ben Gill. Who therefore has been more responsible than anyone else for the scale of the open-ended disaster which is still engulfing British farming? Mr Ben Gill. And who, when it comes to discussing the future of British farming, should therefore be first in line to keep his trap shut? No prizes for guessing.

'Even Newer Muckspreader'

Down on the Fish Farm

THOUSANDS of square miles of Scottish coastal waters have again been closed to shellfish fishermen because of toxic algal blooms. Diners ordering shellfish in restaurants would be well advised to ask where the delicacies came from and when they were harvested.

Scapa Flow in Orkney, once famous for pristine water quality and high-grade shellfish, has been hit by three poisonous blooms: amnesic shellfish poisoning (ASP), paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP), and diarrhetic shellfish poisoning (DSP). ASP eats holes in human brains and there is no known cure.

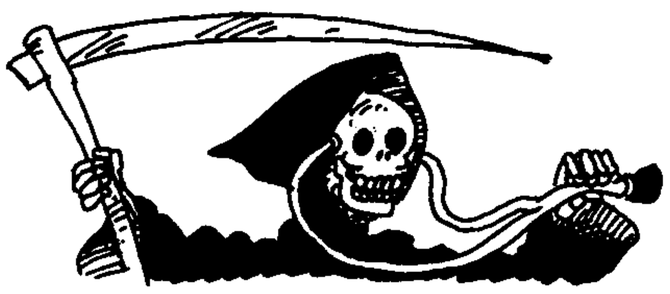
In other areas the food standards agency (FSA) identifies fisheries where shellfish must be "shucked" prior to being sold. "Shucked" means the removal of hepatopancreas, mantle and gills (infected bits) prior to sale. This process should be carried out by an "approved" shucking plant.

There have been "voluntary closure agreements" because of ASP, DSP and PSP in a further 29 west Highland and Islands sea lochs. Maitland Murdoch, admin assistant at the FSA, reminded shellfish processors: "The absence of information from offshore scallop grounds is not necessarily indicative of the area being free of algal blooms."

With three exceptions all toxic algal blooms have occurred close to factory-salmon farms that dump untreated, nutrient-rich sewage into coastal waters. Despite a raft of more than 30 independent scientific papers to the contrary, the Scottish executive (SE) refuses to accept that fish farm waste "triggers" these blooms. Instead it insists poisonous blooms are "naturally occurring".

Blooms are now so intense they kill fake salmon. During August more than one million fish suffocated in cages in Shetland and the west Highlands because of toxic algae. Mark Jones, an Inverness-based vet, said: "We've been picking up high levels of algae on sites in the north west Highlands and Orkney." But Prof Tony Hawkins, director of the government fisheries research service marine lab in Aberdeen, commented: "These blooms are seasonal."

'Old Trout'



DOING THE ROUNDS

NEW Labour's "independent" Commission for Health Improvement (CHI), suspiciously quiet before the election, has stirred itself to action with more damning reports of NHS failings going unchecked for years.

First up was Epsom and St Helier trust, with serious shortfalls everywhere: clinical standards, workforce shortages, the physical environment, morale, leadership and a lack of whistleblowing. Everyone knew for ages but didn't know what to do about it.

CHI has produced two pages of action points which might make a difference. But who will check? CHI won't be back for four years, has no remit over validation of services and very few teeth or resources to ensure its recommendations are enforced. NHS accountability is still light years away.

● CHI seemed to acknowledge this in a second report about Loughborough GP Peter Green, who indecently assaulted patients at whim over 12 years. Again the problem was at least strongly suspected, complaints were made and nothing happened. The most reliable indicators of a problem are the concerns of patients and staff, neither of which has ever been given much credence in the NHS.

The view that each single medical error and complaint should be independently scrutinised to prevent recurrence has long been proposed by Dr Bill Pickering (Eyes passim), whose published* proposals for a medical inspectorate may now finally reach health secretary Alan Milburn's ear (not that Pickering will get any credit for it). This clearly should be the role of CHI, but in recommending a new single complaints tracking system and tougher lines of accountability, the commission has recognised that it is currently just reacting to past tragedies rather than preventing future ones.

● IF CHI isn't up to the job, what about the National Patient Safety Agency? NPSA is another of Milburn's babies, headed by Professor Rory Shaw, medical director of Hammersmith hospitals NHS trust. Prof Shaw was big on soundbite on his appointment. "The creation of the NPSA is a milestone in the change form a culture of blame to one of openness and learning from past events. Doctors patients, nurses and everyone involved in the delivery of safe healthcare will be happy to report and discuss incidents where it is clear that there are real benefits to be gained from adverse events and near misses."

So how are things at his own hospital? Prof Shaw became medical director at the Hammersmith in October 1998. Since then he has presided over five inquiries concerning patient safety (Eye 977 onwards). Four of these involved the persecution of two whistleblowing consultants, Peter Dawson and Walter Curati, and found "a radiology department without audit, job or work plans, low morale, uncooperative remote management, prolonged reporting times,

"I wasn't an older patient when I arrived"

unreported films, inadequate scheduling and reporting of cancer patients' films, poor provision of neaonatal radiography, inadequate provision of acute MRI scans and problems with transcriptions and verification of reports."

An independent inquiry into the department ordered by former health secretary Frank Dobson and chaired by Prof Ian Cameron was never published (so much for openness), and allegations are still rife that the trust board (which Shaw sits on) has not yet implemented all the findings of this inquiry, that specific complaints regarding patient safety have not been followed up and that the culture is still one where staff are frightened to speak out.

M.D.

** Regulating Doctors, Ed Gladstone £5 ISBN 1-903 386-01-2.*

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

BUMS ON SEATS

WHEN "Lord" Archer was jailed in July, home secretary David Blunkett was quick to make known his enthusiasm for scrapping the legal anomaly whereby convicted felons are allowed to continue to posture in ermine. But he did not say whether any change in the law would be extended to cover convicted crooks who continue to sit on Labour councils.

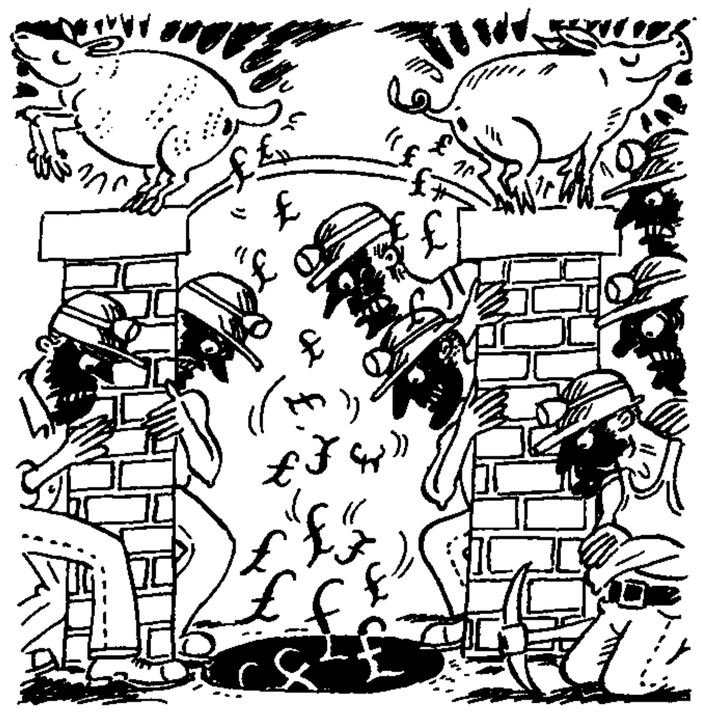
Take Michael Farrington, councillor for Richmond ward in Doncaster, elected in 1999, convicted of expenses fraud on 5 February 2001 and given a suspended two-month sentence. Farrington remains on the council because his sentence is less than the three months that incurs automatic disbarment.

He is a broken man and has withdrawn from most political activity — rarely attending council meetings, not bothering to turn out for surgeries and generally disregarding the poor sods who voted for him after taking Labour party "vetting guarantees" at face value.

Surely the party machine, his local MP Jeff Ennis and Donny councillors are urging him to stand down? Not a bit of it. The problem is that Farrington is the second Richmond ward councillor to be convicted, while a third is under arrest. Before Donnygate, the ward's three councillors had Labour majorities of up to 1,500, but they have since plummeted to 219, 329 and, er, one.

The previously rock-solid Labour council has seen its majority imperilled by the combined forces of Lib Dems, Tories and Independents. Its slim advantage is likely to disappear altogether with more trials due in coming months. Labour clings on to political control of council committees and handsome allowances only through the deft deployment of the convicted criminals who remain under its protection, despite ostensibly being "suspended" and sitting as "independents". Farrington is not up for reelection until 2003. What chance of Blunkett getting busy before then?

● ENERGY minister Brian Wilson phones the *Eye* in a strop over last issue's story which told how the 250 miners at coal-rich Hatfield colliery near Doncaster, who lost their jobs last month, are disappointed at the apparent indifference of the government, the council and their union to their fate. Not so, says Brian. We're paying up to £50,000 a week for the pit's maintenance (er, for no more than four weeks) in the hope that a buyer can be found! Yet for some reason the ungrateful miners — unpaid for a month, owed three weeks wages before that, and *sans* any redundancy dosh – are still not dancing in the streets at this crumb from the nuclear-loving energy supremo. And now the sacked men are reeling from a new blow. Doncaster council, which can't afford to help the miners, has postponed the start of work on a £70,000 triumphal arch it has commissioned from sculptor Sebastian Boyesen, described as the "gateway to Doncaster's famous market". Work on the



"eye-catching sculpture" featuring a bronze sheep and pig balancing on top of two pink brick columns *[sic]*, is now expected to start just in time to mess up the market over the busy Christmas period.

BASSAM BASHED

IN THE last *Eye* we told how Lord "Steve" Bassam circulated a secret discussion document to cronies on his strategy for encouraging a "Yes" vote in next month's referendum on whether Skidrow-on-Sea – sorry, the vibrant, thrusting new city of Brighton and Hove – should have an elected mayor.

Sadly, Bash'em's campaign has met flak with news that it has been given an interest-free loan by the "think-tank" New Local Government Network, which was founded by Smokin' Steve himself and is peopled by sidekicks like Hove MP Ivor Caplin.

"Think-tank" is stretching it a bit, for there are no great brains aboard. Most of the thinking at the NLGN concerns how its corporate sponsors, such as Crapita and KPMG (both of which have employed Bash'em as a consultant) can win yet more lucrative contracts from Labour councils. ServiceTeam, another NLGN affiliate, is already favourite to snap up Brighton's troubled refuse collection service.

IF ONLY

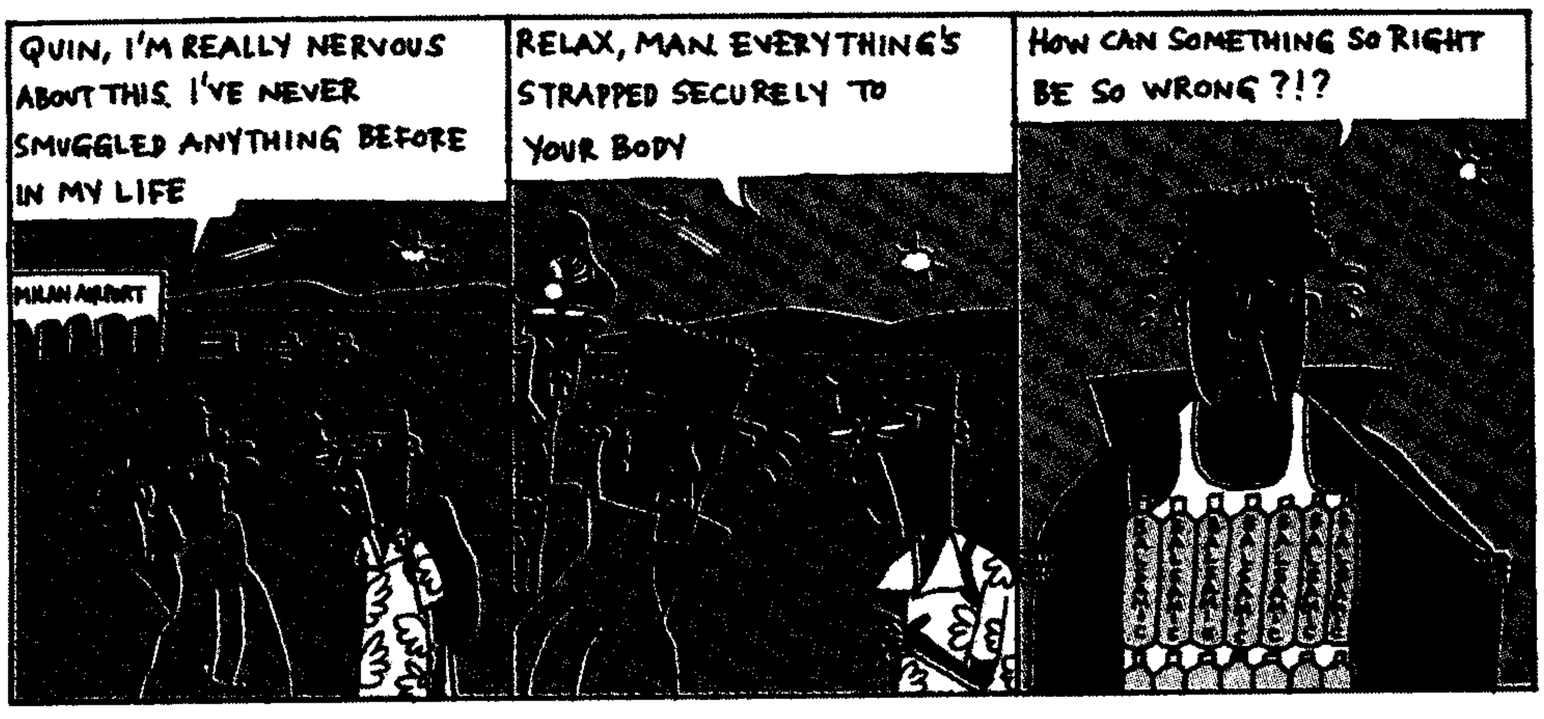
ISLE OF WIGHT voters did not have long to wait to see the whiter-than-Wight Island First (IF) alliance of Lib Dem and Independent councillors reveal their true colours.

One of their first IFfy moves was to outlaw the tradition of allowing the public to ask questions in person at council meetings. Now questions must be sent in writing two days beforehand. Both question and written answer will then be read out at the meeting. A curious move, since the mechanism already exists for the public to write to County Hall with questions and have them answered in writing.

An explanation may lie in the long list of embarrassments (see *Eyes passim*) brought to light by oral questions from the island's public. These have forced at least three inquiries which have left the council looking less than capable of putting the Island First. There was the probe into the sell-off of council care homes to a private firm run by a man criticised by the Charities Commission for mishandling funds. Then there was the Island Harbour marina scandal with a massive write-off of unpaid harbour dues, largely due to the "loss" by County Hall of the marina's lease. Nearly 18 months of oral questions about the waste of £140,000 on computer software that was never used revealed that the official concerned had failed to consult councillors or go out to tender on the deal, and that relevant files were "missing". Involved citizens getting at the truth by asking pertinent questions of their councillors? It sounds dangerously like democracy. No wonder it had to be stopped.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


QUIN, I'M REALLY NERVOUS ABOUT THIS. I'VE NEVER SMUGGLED ANYTHING BEFORE IN MY LIFE
MILAN AIRPORT
RELAX, MAN. EVERYTHING'S STRAPPED SECURELY TO YOUR BODY
HOW CAN SOMETHING SO RIGHT BE SO WRONG ?!?

High Principals

THE behaviour of Rick Dearing, the departing principal of Filton College in Bristol who told a classics lecturer to clear her desk and leave the premises immediately, ten days before she was due to take redundancy, appears to be part of a pattern (see *Eye 1034*).

In September Sally Knights is taking her case to an employment tribunal in Cardiff complaining about the way her departure was handled and the restructuring which forced her to take redundancy in the first place. Dearing will not be around to take the flak, however, as he is leaving to take up a new post as principal of Cambridge Regional College.

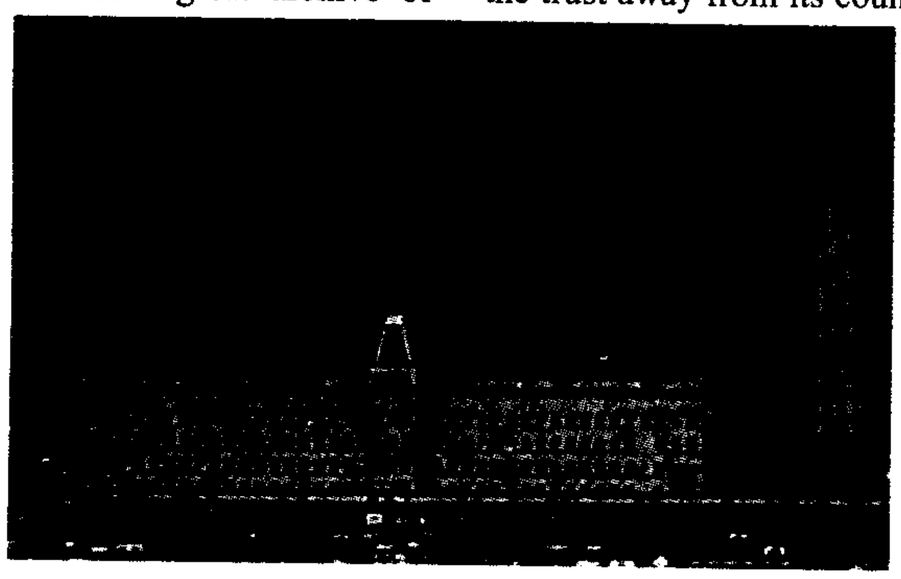
In June 1994 Dearing used a similar approach to the head of psychology at Solihull Sixth Form College, where he was then acting principal. Keith Munday had been off work for several months with severe stress and depression when Dearing took the helpful step of informing him that he was not allowed to set foot on the college premises or make contact with his colleagues until he had given notice of his intended date of return and agreed to resume his teaching duties in full.

The college maintained this policy until Munday took early retirement due to ill health the following year. He has not worked since. Once again, however, Dearing was not around to witness the consequences of his actions, as in September 1994 he left to become vice-principal at nearby Solihull College.

NOOKS and CORNERS

IF THERE is anything to be said in favour of Sir Jocelyn Stevens it is that, on becoming chairman of English Heritage in 1992, he immediately cancelled plans for the organisation to leave central London and have its headquarters at Nottingham. No doubt Ol' Piranha Teeth had no idea where Nottingham was and didn't want to find out, but he also grasped that a national organisation belongs in the capital where things happen and where access is easiest for the majority.

The consequences of listening to the management consultants that Mrs Thatcher's Britain worshipped was already evident in the scandalous exile of the National Monuments Record and the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments to Swindon. That great archive of photographs and documents was once easily accessible to the general public in Savile Row in central London; now research requires a long and expensive train journey from Paddington which naturally deters anyone living elsewhere in Britain. The result is just what was predicted: few people go to the NMR. As for the promise made by the civil servants that, to compensate, the whole archive would be put on line, it was just a lie.



A better choice? Bradford's Manningham Mills

Given the disastrous precedent it seems extraordinary that the National Trust should now be planning to do the same; but the dear old trust has long been rather old fashioned. A report by management consultants Towers Perrin — which cost a mere £370,000 — recommends moving out of London and concentrating all staff in modern open-plan offices. Apart, that is, from the director-general, the policy unit and, oddly enough, the press office which will be allowed to stay in the capital — lucky them.

This reorganisation may save about £1m — pea*nuts*, *really*, when you consider the cost of maintaining a great house like, say, Knole. But the exercise is not about saving money; it is about the culture of management and its development. Far from simplifying things, the consultants recommend introducing an additional level of managers to be called "territory directors", who, naturally, will be able to overrule the mere experts who know what the trust is *for*.

If there really is a case for moving outside London then, given the nature of the National Trust, it might be appropriate to move into an historic building that needs a use — the Manningham Mills in Bradford, say, or the great warehouses at Weedon (George III's capital had Bonaparte invaded). But that is not how management consultants think. Having considered Bath and Chippenham and other places along the M4 corridor where property prices are high, they have now decided upon Swindon — to keep the exiled staff of the NMR company, perhaps. It seems not to have occurred to Towers Perrin or the trust's top brass that Swindon may not be quite the right image for an organisation concerned with beautiful landscapes and significant historic buildings.

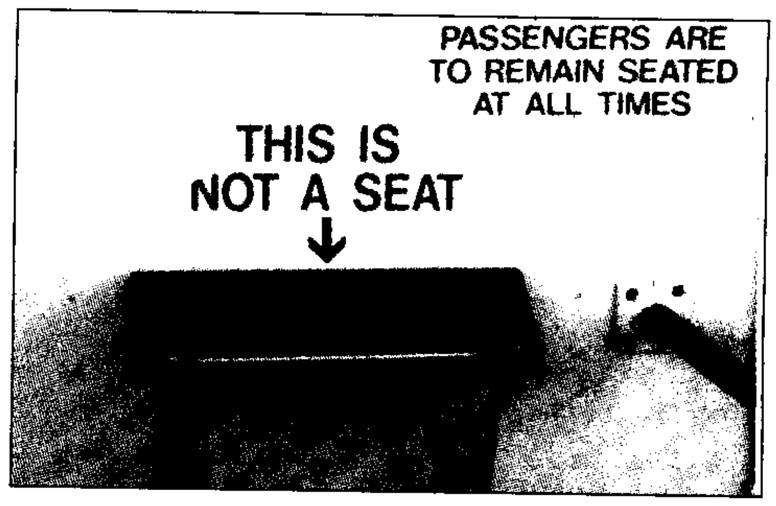
Worse, while the NMR moved into old Great Western Railway sheds, the trust is considering a new building in a business park. The new director-general, Fiona Reynolds, 43 ("Blair Babe", "breath of fresh air", etc), wants to move the trust away from its country house image back towards its landscape and ecological roots. No bad thing, perhaps; yet moving to Swindon can only work against that aim by encouraging unnecessary car use and energy consumption. It will be setting a bad example as well as making the organisation more remote and inaccessible: modern business parks, dependent upon the car, represent everything the National Trust should be *against*.

Reynolds did not initiate this plan; she inherited it and so, like the great Sir Jocelyn, could cancel it to great acclaim. As it is, morale in the trust is at an all-time low and many useful and experienced staff are threatening to leave rather than go into exile. Now there may be things wrong with the trust — tweed 'n' corduroy snobbery and elitism, perhaps — but on the whole it is an organisation that does very worthwhile things and does them well. This sort of management-led reorganisation seems a throwback to the Thatcher years and, given the clear lessons of the NMR, to make this change for no good reason seems lunatic to the point of malice.

Ms Reynolds's background is in countryside issues and she is said to be unsympathetic to the trust's role in preserving country houses (she has announced that no more money is to go towards the conservation of historic buildings, although a good proportion of the two million members will surely have joined because they care about that). More worrying is her role, past and present, in working in policy units at 10 Downing Street. Is moving the National Trust from Queen Anne's Gate to Swindon a reflection of "new" Labour's hatred of history?

'Piloti'

I-SPY *Manly Ferry, Sydney*



Submitted by Peter Le Feuvre. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

JUST as well Scottish Opera's new *Die Walkure* was such a success when it opened at the Edinburgh Festival the other night, because the company has very little else to keep its spirits up these days. After a series of bitter boardroom battles, chief executive Christopher Barron is beginning to look like a haunted man.

Earlier this year the company seemed to have turned a corner in its messily haphazard life. A pile of debt was wiped out by £2m special funding. A major new commission for a full length opera was confirmed to go into production in 2002. And with substantial cash from the Bank of Scotland, a long-awaited *Ring* Cycle — the benchmark by which the strength of international opera companies is reckoned — was in progress.

Then the problems started again. Barron's management style came under attack — not least when stories emerged of Scottish Opera's poor record for workplace bullying. The commissioned opera (portentously called *Monster*) threatened to disintegrate when its librettist Janice Galloway and composer Sally Beamish complained that payments due to them under their contract had not been made. The librettist stormed off, leaving the composer to make formal complaints over Barron's head to the Scottish Arts Council. Now Barron is in deep water with Scottish Opera's sister company Scottish Ballet, where he is also chief executive.

Two weeks ago he announced that he would not renew the contract of the Scottish Ballet's artistic director Robert North, who has barely been in the job a year. North accused Barron of duplicity, dishonesty and having secret plans to reduce Scottish Ballet to the point where it could quietly be killed off.

A few days later North, who is American, received an out-of-the-blue notification from the home office that his UK work permit was invalid and that he would be required to leave the country within the week. Any connection between North's expulsion and his contretemps with Barron has as yet to be established. But the timing is unfortunate. And Glasgow's café crowd will no doubt draw their own conclusions.

THE highlight of the Proms last week was meant to be the legendary (and legendarily tempestuous) Martha Argerich, specially scheduled for Bank Holiday Monday and featuring the fiery pianist in a concerto with the visiting NHK Orchestra from Tokyo and conductor Charles Dutoit.

Alas, it didn't go to plan. The pianist raced ahead, the orchestra dragged dismally behind. The intonation of the strings was poor. And anyone close enough to see Ms Argerich's face when it was over would have realised she wasn't happy.

But this was nothing to what passed backstage where she was heard expressing strong opinions to Dutoit about the inadequacy of his orchestra and the indignity of being forced to play with it. "A real old kitchen sink exchange" was one observer's comment. And no doubt wreathed in nostalgia: Dutoit is Argerich's former husband.

`Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

The summer's over, Sophie— time to get back to work.
VICTORIA KLEE
CUTTING-EDGE ART
HOXTON
Journalists are back from holiday, eager for stuff to fill their pages.
Yes! Time to start on a big new installation!
No! Time to get completely pissed and be arrested!

SIGNAL FAILURES

A day in the life of Railtrack

THE entire Railtrack log for 18 July has been leaked to the *Eye*, showing a typical day on the railway. And what a day it was.

Of the 10 incidents of signals passed at danger (spads), only three were due to driver error. That won't, however, stop the media vilifying drivers again when the next spad figures are published.

Equally worrying, the log also suggests Railtrack has no better control over its contractors than it did before the Hatfield accident last October.

On the day in question at **Purley,** a man supposedly acting as lookout for maintenance engineers didn't notice a train coming until it hit him, severing an arm and throwing him into the path of another train which killed him. He was working for a contractor appointed by a Railtrack contractor.

At **Acton** a signaller was surprised to find engineers working on the track. The engineers hadn't realised they should "communicate with the signaller". On the main west-coast line at **Preston,** meanwhile, engineers were moving a set of points as an express approached. The train had been shown a green light but ended up on the wrong track, creating potential for a head-on collision. The incident caused train delays totalling nearly 5,000 minutes and 13 cancellations.

Soon after the west-coast line returned to normal, a train on the **east-coast line** brought down the overhead electric cable. The log ascribes this to defective Railtrack equipment. The problem caused nearly 13,000 minutes' delay, affecting 157 trains.

● NOR was 18 JULY a good day for the train protection warning system (TPWS), designed as a cheap and second-rate substitute for automatic train protection (ATP). Though it is the great hope of the government and rail industry for reducing spads, on 18 July TPWS actually caused one.

A **London to Glasgow** train made an emergency stop — a frightening event on an express — when a signal turned from green to red before the driver's eyes. Railtrack's log states tersely: "The reason for the reversion [to red] was a TPWS fault."

In the rush to discredit ATP, nobody audited the risks TPWS would create. As this DIY botch spreads across the country, more trains are making emergency stops. On 18 July faulty TPWS also slammed on the brakes as a train entered **London Bridge** station at just 5mph. Later that day the same happened on another track at London Bridge, and then at **Victoria**.

● THERE seems to be a pot of gold at the end of every disaster for Railtrack directors. Following the 38 deaths at Southall and Ladbroke Grove, the government decided Railtrack was incapable of policing rail safety and created Railway Safety instead. Key posts were quickly filled by, er, the people who were meant to have upheld safety at Railtrack.

Rod Muttram moved from Railtrack's safety division to become chief executive of Railway Safety, to do much the same work with no interruption. Yet he gained a £246,000 pay-off in the process. According to Sir David Davies, chairman of Railway Safety, Muttram's windfall consisted of his Railtrack salary, pension contributions and funds from sale of shares.

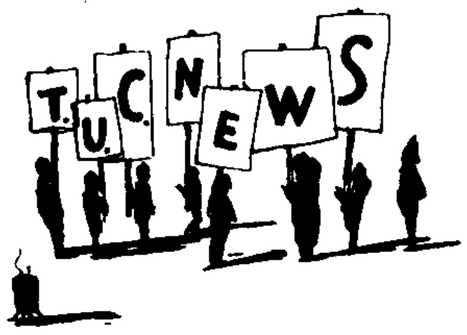
Muttram had chosen to invest in other rail companies. But when forced to sell those shares before joining Railway Safety he was compensated – using cash pumped into Railtrack by taxpayers – for the losses he incurred because rail shares had tumbled (mainly because of Railtrack's incompetence on safety matters).

Muttram had to sell his shares so "there could be no suggestion that commercial considerations had affected any decision" by Railway Safety. That raises questions about how many Railtrack directors own shares in companies which depend on Railtrack as suppliers or customers, and to what extent Railtrack's safety and commercial decisions have been, and still are, influenced by personal greed.

'Dr B. Ching'

I-Spy *Railway station, Henley*

Submitted by **Geoffrey Copus.**



BILL MORRIS, the increasingly vexed leader of the once all powerful Transport and General Workers' Union, has been busy doing his bit for the Irish peace process by suspending the regional secretary of the union's Irish region, Mick O'Reilly, and seeking to replace him with a close Morris ally from the Scottish region of the T&G, Jimmy Elsby.

Although O'Reilly – the first southerner to hold the position since partition – was given his marching orders shortly after returning from a holiday in Spain earlier this summer, the rumblings of discontent have spread to the office of the Irish Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern. Ahern has told colleagues he is "not happy at the manner in which O'Reilly has been treated" and that he "resents London coming in and calling the shots on Irish terrain".

The Irish region of the T&G, the ATGWU, straddles the religious divide and has been credited with building bridges between the warring communities. O'Reilly was only sent a copy of the 240-page report detailing charges against him in July. Many appear to relate to "embarrassment" caused to the T&G by a three-day rail strike in May.

O'Reilly has been forbidden to speak to the media, and Bill Morris is keeping quiet on the affair. But according to union sources in the Irish Republic, O'Reilly was accused of recruiting 118 breakaway train drivers without prior consent from London. Despite this, it is claimed that the train drivers have since received letters welcoming them to the T&G, from, er, Bill Morris. O'Reilly is also alleged to have advised a union official to use his own solicitor rather than a union one when facing disciplinary procedures. It is also claimed that Belfast T&G organiser Eugene McGlone was also suspended at the same time as O'Reilly for the heinous crime of "cooking fish in the office canteen" rather than attending a seminar on women's health.

O'Reilly's suspension came a week before the International Confederation of Trade Unions biennial conference, where he was hoping to be reelected to ICTU's executive and where he has in the past proved to be something of a critic. Once again, according to union sources in the Irish Republic, "O'Reilly has been very critical of various national agreements covering wages and employment. The fact that he was suspended means that he couldn't stand for reelection. Bill Morris is turning into a control freak."

AD NAUSEAM

ALL is not well in adland. Ad revenues are in freefall. Nine out of ten of Britain's largest agencies have reported a slump in billings this year. And even the nice guys of the last recession – the Bartle Bogle Hegartys and the Abbott Mead Vickers, who never sack anyone (so they can boast they never sack anyone) — are wielding the axe.

Amid such gloom it may seem tasteless to talk about the Deluxe Furniture Store's latest campaign, but it's this kind of advertising more than any cyclical downturn that really gives agencies the heebie-jeebies.

DFS's forte is ersatz three-piece suites and other status-symbols for the lumpen proletariat. Traditionally, the advertising has been as tacky as the creations, with Michael Aspel or whichever antique B-lister needs the money narrating, as a couple stand and gawp at those lowest-ever prices. Now DFS has decided it's time to go trendy and so a new campaign has been excitedly cobbled together, under the theme "What Turns You On?"

Predictably, what appear to turn Britons on are sex, leather, sex and ice-cream, preferably all at the same time and involving soft furnishings of unimaginable plushness. It's all very tawdry and silly, which would be of little interest to anyone were it not for the fact that DFS's modernising strategy, which came in for a fair bit of stick from industry commentators, appears to be working — their half-year sales are up 11 percent and they're the market leader. They even clocked 38 complaints to the ITC in just 24 hours after the ad broke, so they must be doing something right.

Such success only compounds advertising agencies' woes. DFS's work was done in-house: no agency required; and the resulting spot, pisspoor though it may be, remains no worse than when big boys Bates had the account. It's bad enough if no one is advertising: what happens if brand leaders decide they'll cut back by dispensing with the middlemen, but not the ads themselves? Cue panic in Soho.

● **SPEAKING OF middlemen, applause please for the limitless largesse of advertising genius Trevor Beattie of TBWA. Last week he announced that he had given his blessing to a forthcoming Saatchi & Saatchi campaign for the Dyslexia Institute that borrows his risible "fcuk" logo (see *Eyes passim*).**

The proposed line, sat beneath a large "fcuk", is "Dyslexia affects 2.5 million people. Even in Advertising" which is as much a French Connection free plug as it is an act of charity. Either way, now we know — Beattie's creation, if indeed he did create it, was just a typo. What he meant to say was "fuck", although strangely enough when hauled in front of the Advertising Standards Authority time and again Beattie and Co have always denied this.

Letters

Sylvie grin?

Sir,

Would it not be possible to have a feature in your organ following your Archer fantasies in Eye editorial about the great man's heroic exploits whilst banged up? Suggested title: THE PRISONER OF BRENDA.

Yours,
ANNA LOMAX,
Luton.

Globe-totting

Sir,

You are right that programme budgets at the BBC World Service are tight but wrong that our series of programmes on refugees couldn't afford to travel for first-hand material (Media News, Eye 1035). In fact, the programmes went to Iran, Tanzania, France, Australia and America for their interviews and material.

Yours faithfully,
PHIL HARDING,
Director, BBC English Network and News.

Silly season

Sir,

It really is silly/space filling season in the Eye if you have to resort to a "story" that a long-standing hard-working, well-respected public sector worker has had a pay rise and, after a long marriage ending in the death of a much loved husband, she now hopes to remarry. (Item on Rita Davies: Newham).

Yours,
MARIAN NYMAN,
Whitstable, Kent.

Stunning explanation

Sir,

The letter "Watt's Funny" (Eye 1035) attempts to correct the physics of the wording of the cartoon in Eye 1034, but introduces further error. The relation between voltage (Volts) and charge (Coulombs) is not simple equivalence; rather these quantities are linked by a third physical quantity, the capacity (Farads), in the form of the equation: charge = voltage x capacity.

Thus, the fully informative answer to the thug's question "What's the charge?" should have been "50,000 (*) volts multiplied by my capacity as a police officer"!

(This was the stun-gun voltage generally reported in the press.)*

Yours,
NORMAN MARSH,
Birkenhead, Wirral.

"They made a good job of his hip replacement in Germany"

B. Ching beached?

Sir,

I am writing in response to Dr B. Ching's unwarranted attacks on our members employed in Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate (HMRI) in Eye 1033.

To make a comment that it took 40 deaths for HSE to realise that the new system is unsafe is totally unjustified. If Dr B. Ching had read Lord Cullen's report then he would know that m' noble Lord has gone on record stating that there was not "one specific action" that could have been taken by our members which would have prevented the Paddington tragedy.

I am disappointed that Dr B. Ching, normally a strident critic of rail privatisation, has chosen to follow the line taken by the mainstream railway press and score cheap points at the expense of the HMRI. By attacking the HMRI, Dr B. Ching merely attacks the symptoms not the cause of the rail industry's problems. It is unfair to attack the inspectorate without reporting that the Conservative government that privatised the rail industry, fragmenting it into dozens of competing companies driven by shareholder expectation, did not give any extra resources to the railway inspectorate to recruit and retain staff in this "brave new world."

HSE has taken steps to bolster HMRI, unfortunately all this has done is to transfer HMRI's resource shortfall to other directorates within HSE. The critical issue here is to ensure HSE obtains the resources it needs to deliver its role across the complete range of its responsibilities.

IPMS remains committed to a campaign for greater resources across HSE. I'm sure Dr B. Ching would agree and support such a campaign.

Yours,
RICHARD HARDY,
Negotiations Officer, IPMS North.

Buisnesses and schools link up

Petersfield Post

Woman of letters

Sir,

Sorry to ruin a perfectly good conspiracy theory but Seamus Milne is not the letters editor of the Guardian. I am. What's more, he wasn't even in the office on the day that the Harold Pinter letter came in.

Yours,
LIZ McGREGOR,
The Guardian.

Lessing is more

Sir,

You may (or may not) be right about where responsibility lies for the Guardian's curious editorial positions (Eye 1035), though there's no doubt they're odd. At the time of the IRA's "historic gesture", and of the Colombian caper, the main topics of the readers' letters selected for publication related to some claptrap about Doris Lessing and feminism, and Larry Adler's rivals. Nothing at all on the heavy stuff.

I think the Guardian's project is to conjure up a dream world in which oppressed househusbands while away the dreary hours by playing the songs of the peace-loving IRA on their mouth organs.

Yours,
GAVIN VINSON,
London N10.

*"Apparently **her** father has bought them this absolutely **fabulous** pond"*

Bitching

Sir,

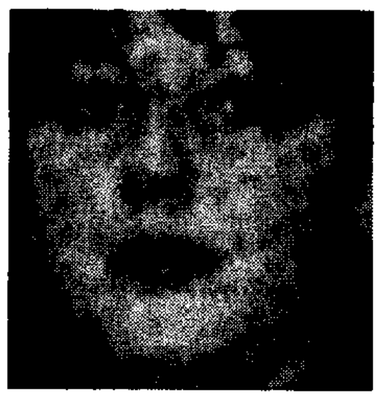
Re: Ad Nauseam, Eye 1035

An aspect of J Walter Thompson's awful Smirnoff TV ads not mentioned in your piece is that "cool" piano-playing dog with the masculine voice and macho patter is, quite obviously even to the untrained eye, a bitch. What are we supposed to infer from this about the properties of Smirnoff?

Yours,
DR. RICHARD A'BROOK,
Carnoustie, Scotland.

Lookalike

Milosevic



Burchill

Sir,

I wonder if any of your readers have noticed the peculiar physical similarity between the harshly-spoken Julie Burchill with the teflon septum, quondam News of the World columnist and "Queen of the Groucho Club"; and Marija Milosevic, the style-queen of Serbia and daughter of the Stalinist war-criminal Slobodan Milosevic.

Could they, by any chance, be related?

Yours,
EDNA WELTHORPE (MRS),
Oxford.

Pot and kettle

Sir,

After enjoying (as usual) your "Dumb Britain" column in Eye 1035, I was concerned to see your own standards lapse on the very same page.

There were two problems in the article on the training of Italian police prior to the G8 summit in Genoa. Firstly, the Rodney King incident occurred in 1991, not 1992. Secondly, you claim that Italian police were trained by the "Los Angeles Police Department," and subsequently state that the training was carried out by "two LA police sheriffs."

You have therefore completely confused the LAPD (which was involved in the arrest of Rodney King) and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office (which wasn't). If the Italians were indeed trained by the sheriff's office, then there is no link with Rodney King, and the whole story is completely pointless.

Question: What popular phrase involves a pot and a kettle?

Yours,
MR. P COOKSLEY,
Woking, Surrey.

Speeding bullets

Sir,

"Hedgehog" has swallowed the political misinformation, which serves as an alibi for over-taxing fuel and failing to provide adequate roads. "Speed" does not kill. Home Office figures show that less than 10 percent of road deaths are caused directly by excessive speed and in less than 15 percent is speed a contributory factor. The major cause of road deaths is driver (and pedestrian) error.

"Speeding" is driving at a speed inappropriate for prevailing conditions. That is very rarely the same as exceeding the statutory speed limit – an arbitrary, fixed figure that is too low as often as it is too high.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD T HOOK,

Via email.

Sir,

Hedgehog should get out of Islington more often. What most (7,000 is hardly a representative sample) safe motorists object to is not the use of cameras to reduce unsafe speeds in dangerous areas such as junctions or school entrances, but the use of these devices to simply earn revenue in areas of straight road where the only danger is motorists spotting the cameras late and jamming on their brakes so as not to get caught.

I think that such naivety should be left in the sixth form common room and not given credence by appearing in the same publication as a picture of Richard Branson showing his arse.

Yours, with three points on his licence for doing 85 on the M1,

RICHARD LLOYD,

Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire.

"She shouldn't have franchised the recipe. This tastes nothing like children"

Sir,

*For many years I have listened to proponents in the media advocating high-speed driving. I have also suffered abuse from other motorists because I choose to obey speed limits. Now, just as I was coming around to their point of view that a few thousand deaths a year is a small price to pay for the liberty of being able to drive like a c***, Hedgehog goes and destroys all this operant conditioning, leaving me confused and frustrated. If I should now go out and perform a high-speed hit and run operation against the likes of Quentin Willson or Jeremy Clarkson, I shall hold you personally responsible.*

Yours in a minority,
EVIE PAYNE,

Via email.

Difficult delivery

Sir,

Have just received your Xmas 2000 edition, this 22nd August 2001. Forgive me for not being amused by Newman's cartoon of the wisemen on p.5... "We brought the presents because you can't trust the post!"

I believe it's customary to threaten cancellation of my subscription, but it may not be your fault...

Yours,
ANDREW ROSE,

Via email from Papua New Guinea

"If you don't want to know the results, look away now"

Wrong-footed

Sir,

Square Eyes said, "For those of us used to watching football highlights on the BBC, the first main change was the absence of an on-screen clock showing how much of the match has elapsed."

No it isn't. BBC highlights never had this. No, the first main change was the absence of any on-screen football.

Yours,
AIDAN RUSH,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"... would it be hundreds of years, would it be centuries? Who knows..."
ANDY PEEBLES, Radio Sheffield
(S. Finnegan)

"Is cricket in danger of becoming a political football?"
KEVIN GREENING, Radio 5 Live
(Nat High)

Phone-In Caller: *'The Pawnbroker', Rod – is that the one about the small boy befriending a stray dog?*
Rod Steiger: *No. It's the one about a pawnbroker.*
RADIO 5 LIVE
(Mike Robinson)

"... I think you'll find that John Parrot was a victim of his own downfall there..."
STEVE DAVIS, ITV
(Matthew Dupuy)

"I think this could be our best victory over Germany since the war"
JOHN MOTSON, BBC1
(Ellis Rich)

O·B·N·K

She's de-lightful, she's de-licious, she's de-lovely – she's De-lia!

Congratulations to all concerned for *Ooh Aah Delia* (2 May, ITV). Could any other TV chef be the subject of such a fascinating and interesting 45-minute programme. It's doubtful. Delia outshines them all and she knows it!

Letter to *Radio Times*

Nominated by Francis Harvey.

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Chile response

Sir,

Your article (Chile? Try a Jersey) questions whether or not the Jersey authorities were co-operating with the Chilean or Spanish authorities in an enquiry into assets supposedly held by the former President Pinochet.

None of the relevant Jersey authorities (the Jersey Financial Services Commission, the Attorney General, or the Police) have received any request from any authority in Chile or Spain in relation to the case you describe. Details of the extensive powers Jersey has to assist fellow agencies in other countries including Chile and Spain and the extent to which assistance is given in practice can be found on the web site of this Commission www.jerseyfsc.org.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD PRATT,

Director General, Jersey Financial Services Commission.

His latest venture on to the roads took him only yards from his house before a community policeman stopped him for not riding a motorcycle while wearing a helmet, York magistrates heard.

Yorkshire Evening Press

Last laugh?

Sir,

You may be interested to know "Daily Express" is an anagram of "Rapidly sexes" and, in a display of foreboding, "Sadly expires".

Yours,
DARREN HUBBARD,

Via email.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

I MUST PRESERVE MY REPUTATION.
THEY SAY THAT YOU'RE GREEDY AND VINDICTIVE.
EXACTLY! THE PUBLIC EXPECTS ME TO SUE.
LIBEL ACTION

Letter from **Malabo**

from Our Own Correspondent

WE HEAR a lot these days about misery and misfortune in the benighted continent of Africa. There is Robert Mugabe, the vile dictator who beats up the whites and rules by terror. Or the Congo, where war and anarchy reign supreme. These are the kinds of places that provoke the indignation and concern of your newspapers and politicians, who demand something should be done, even if what it is that should be done seems a little muddled.

No one pays so much attention to our tiny little country tucked away in an unfashionable corner of central Africa. Which is a pity, because what we have here in Equatorial Guinea is a genuine good news story to cheer the heart, a tale of stable democracy, rapid economic development and real partnership between big foreign companies and the locals.

Just look at the numbers. Since we discovered oil 10 years ago, we have gone from being the poorest place in Africa to one of the richest. We never used to have electricity or water. Now we have mobile phones and satellite dishes. Well, some of us, anyway. A string of multiparty elections have taken place over the past decade with barely a murmur of incident.

For all this we must thank our friends from America and France, most especially ExxonMobil, who have poured billions into making us an oil power. So thoughtful, these companies! One helped our president out with a plane. Another offered him a refund of hundreds of millions of dollars by way of an apology for insisting on an outrageous contract that gave them just about all our oil when we were too poor to argue otherwise. It can surely be only a matter of time before we common folk see some of the lolly now.

We have great faith in Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, our president since the Coup of Liberty in 1979. In fact, we've voted him in three times now, on each occasion by no less than 98 percent. Last time, in some parts of the country, more than 100 percent of us turned out to vote. But then our president comes from fine stock. So talented are his family and friends that the oil business is in the hands of one son, while another is in charge of chopping down our forests. The army is a run by a brother, as is the security service, while most of our generals come from the same village.

Of course even in paradise there are some *malcontents*. We had a problem a couple of years ago with our Bubis, a minority tribe who claimed we Fang were ripping them off, stealing their land and resources. It was nothing of course that our brave chaps in uniform couldn't handle. They would sometimes have to show who was boss by giving our friends a "wheelbarrow ride" — holding them upside down, forcing them to eat grass while cutting off their ears.

Our real fear now is from the hand of history. For Obiang, at nearly 60, is a good 20 years older than most of use when we die. And while we do have things like political parties and constitutions — ever since our new friends in the oil business assured us they would look good for the long-haired human rights brigade that come poking around every so often — most of accept that really the succession is a family matter.

Could we really see at the helm the apple of the president's eye, his favourite son and namesake, Teodoro Jnr? He has publicly denied awful rumours that swept town some weeks back that he had been arrested in the US for an offence related to large amounts of cocaine. Meanwhile he's working on his LA-based music business, but we look forward to the fun we could have should his nation ever call on him to serve.

So you see, there's really so much to enjoy here. But then of course you know already our most famous joker of all, our dear old swimmer Eric the Eel, legendary for being, well, the worst ever. We are used to that; but to our joy he has really made us famous at last — indeed, the laughing stock of the whole world. So you do all care after all. Anyone know the way to Harare?

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"I was slowing down, but Georgann wouldn't wait till I stopped," Everett Williams told police after the death of his wife in a freak motoring accident in Arkansas City. "We both saw Jesus at the side of road, with what looked like twelve people slowly floating up into the air. She started screaming 'He's back! Jesus is back!' and we both thought that the rapture was happening. I tried to pull over, but she

wouldn't wait, because she was convinced Jesus was going to lift her up into the sky, there and then. Before I could stop, she climbed right out of the sunroof crying 'Take me Lord!', jumped off the car, and was run over by the car behind."

Officer Paul Madison later explained precisely how the accident had happened.

"What we have here is a case of mistaken rapture. It seems that a motorist, Ernie Jenkins, was on his way to a toga costume party, dressed as Jesus, with twelve blow-up sex dolls filled with helium in his truck. The tarp covering the dolls came loose, and they started floating into the air, so he stopped, got out, and tried to catch them. The Williams were driving past, saw Mr Jenkins with his arms raised high, assumed it was the Second Coming of Jesus, and Mrs Williams jumped to the wrong conclusion. And to her death. I tell you, this is the strangest thing I've seen since I've been on the force."

Asked to comment, Jenkins replied: "This is all just too weird for me. People have often told me I look like Jesus. That's why I thought I'd go to the party as Christ with His twelve disciples. I never expected anything like this to happen. I wish I'd gone as Nero instead." *(EAP, 23/8/01. Spotter: Michael Wyatt)*

— o —

o *"Hogging the karaoke microphone can have serious consequences for public order," Pol Maj-Gen Boribun Wutpakdi told a press conference in Bangkok, "and I don't just mean fights and arguments. Six people have recently been shot dead in karaoke bars during disputes about whose turn it was to sing, and that's why we're introducing this code of conduct."*

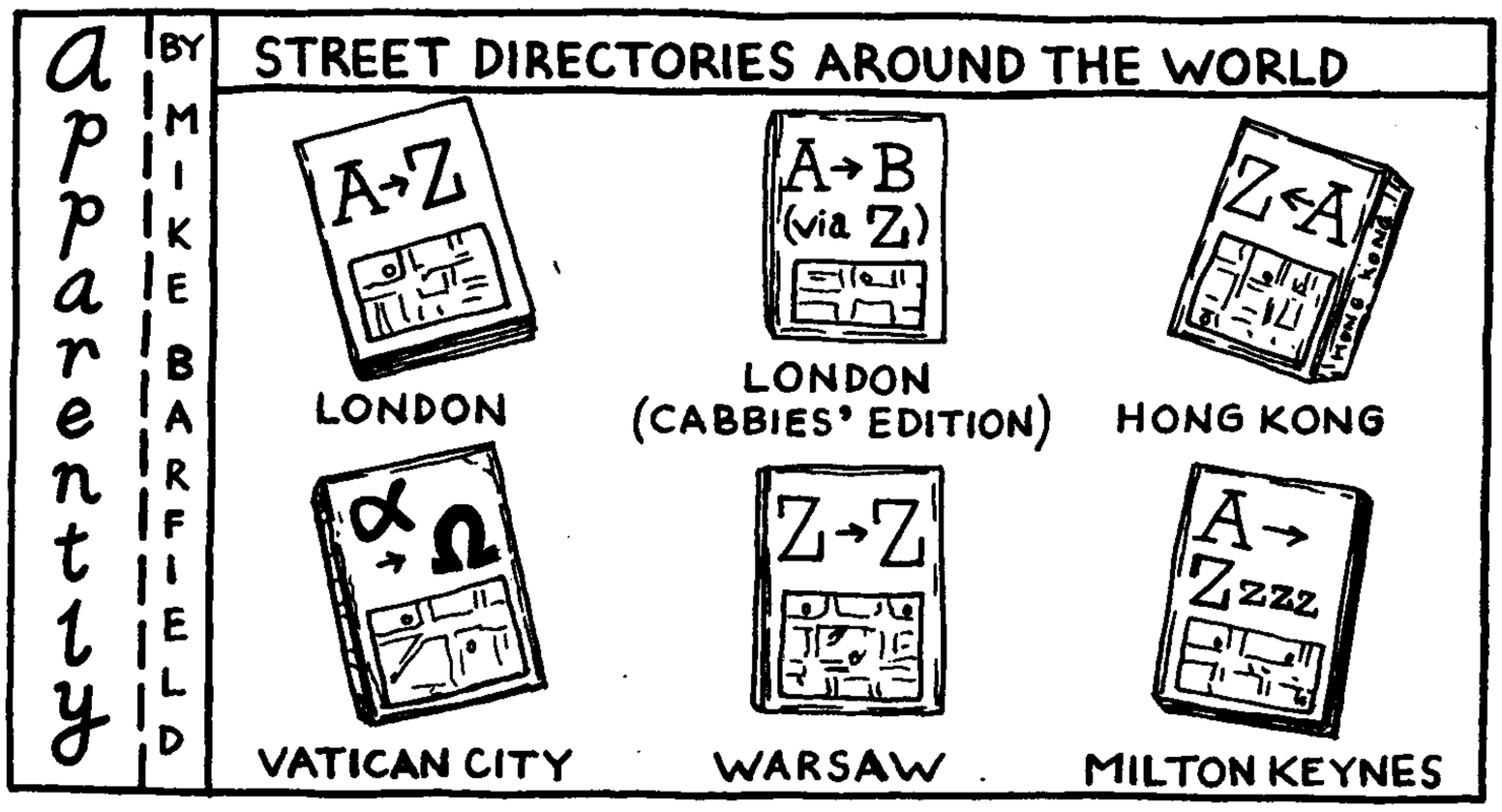
Explaining the reasons for the police crackdown on the city's karaoke bars, Wutpakdi continued: "Just last week, Pichet Iamfuang was shot dead in a bar, after he was accused of not giving others a chance to sing. Shortly before that, Shigeru Yoshida smashed a beer bottle over a friend's head, then shot him six times in the stomach, in a row over whose turn it was to sing next. And I regret to say that even my own force is not immune to such behaviour. In fact, Pol L/Cpl Jirawat Sangworn shot and killed a man last year, and wounded another, because they were calling him names when he was about to sing the song for the third time in a row.

"High spirits are all very well, but this is quite another thing. In future, all managers of karaoke bars must ensure that everyone gets a fair chance to sing. My advice to customers is to sing just one song, and then pass the microphone along. That way, nobody gets hurt." (Bangkok Post, 8/7/01. Spotter: H MacQueen)

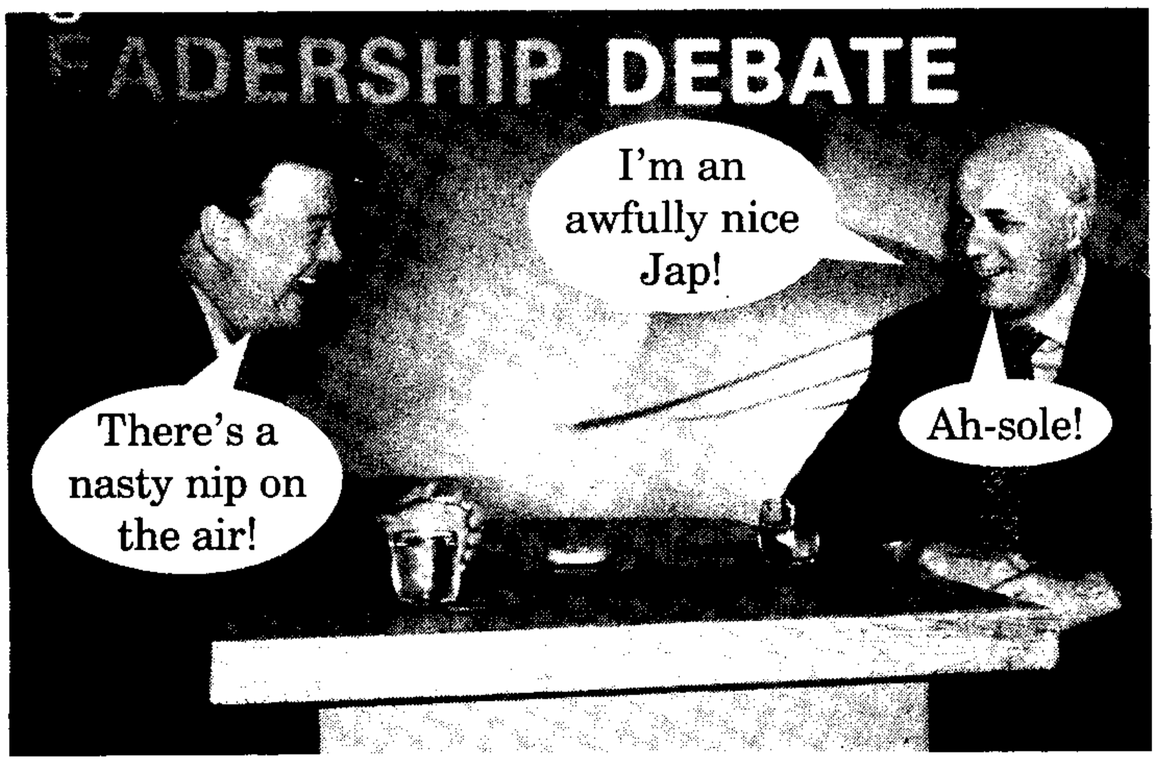
— o —

o "A remnant of French colonialism in Vietnam is 'caphe cut chon' or civet cat coffee. It came into being about 100 years ago, when the French introduced coffee farming into the central highlands. Growers soon noticed that the civet cat had a unique ability to seek out and eat the best ripe coffee beans, as part of its diet. The hardiest beans survive the animal's digestive process intact and are excreted whole, but they are imbued with the distinctive fragrance of the scent gland in the cat's anus.

"To process these civet cat beans, experienced coffee farmers retrieve them from the droppings and sun-dry them for several months until the outer skin flakes off. Then they add salt, sugar, and red wine, before roasting. The beans yield a smooth, strong brew with an earthy taste, and sell for up to $175 a pound. Certainly an unusual beverage, and just one of the many delights of Vietnamese cuisine at this year's festival." *(Brochure for Vietnamese Food Festival, Kuala Lumpur)*



RACE ROW HOTS UP



FOOTBALL TEAM WINS MATCH
Men Score Goals

YESTERDAY a football team won a match. One team scored five goals and the other team scored one. *(Reuters)*

ON OTHER PAGES

● England to win World Cup p. 2 ● Britain to rule world p. 3 ● India and Australia beg to rejoin Empire p. 4 ● Should Michael Owen be the next king? p. 5 ● Goals cheer cows as BSE is wiped out p. 6 ● Beckham to run schools and hospitals p. 7 ● Sven statue for Trafalgar Square plinth? p. 94

Plus millions of pages of tributes and pictures

VOICE OF THE Mirror

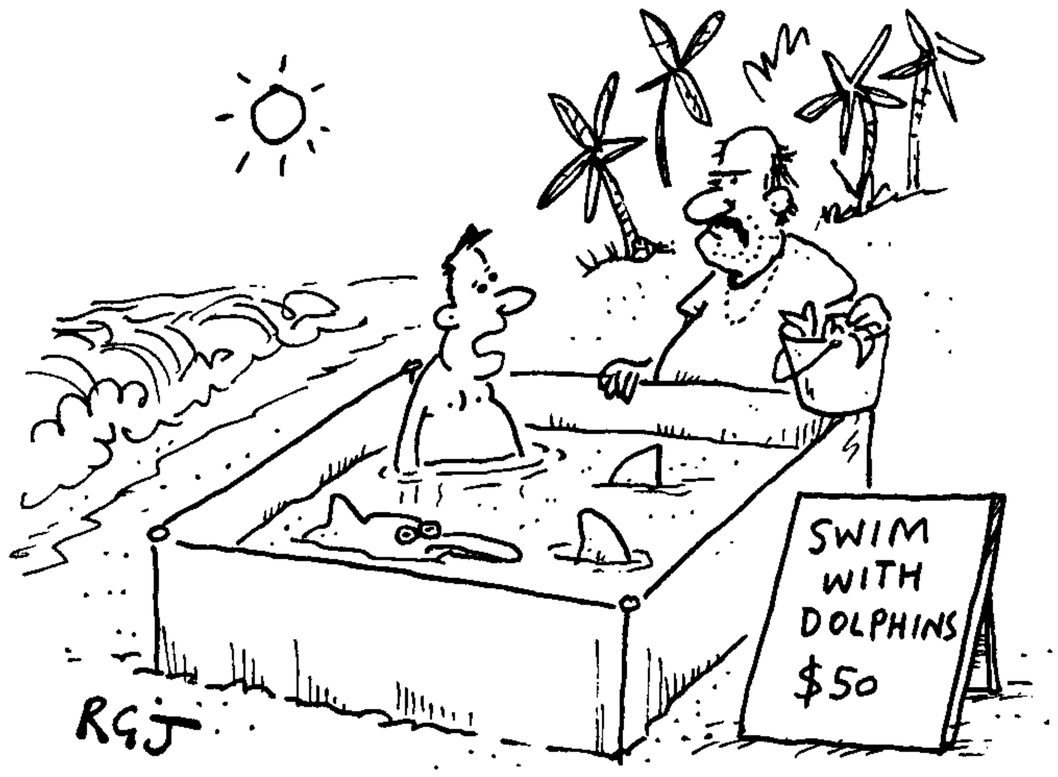
In the wake of the worst performance by a newspaper in the history of covering football we burn the arrogant, irritating and downright-piss-poor Daily Mirror. R.I.P.

And instead of writing an editorial, here is a list of all the things we hate about Germany *(surely "The Mirror"?)*.

Piers Morgan, dodgy share dealing, the 3am Girls, Jonathan Cainer, Piers Morgan, Martin Rowson, Tony Parsons, the City Slickers, James Whitaker, the Sorted column, Quentin Willson, Kelly's-I, Piers Morgan, Mirror Sport, Sir Victor Blank, Paul Routledge, Brian Reade, the Late Robert Maxwell, everything else in the Mirror but particularly really moronic editorials written after football matches against Germany...

Your boys take some beating! Your boys take some beating!

© The Daily Moron



"It's not giving me the sense of freedom I anticipated"

GLENDA SLAGG

The Gal looking for an asylum!

THEY'RE BACK!! The Ab Fab Gals!! Patsy and Edina, stoopid??!? They're bigger, better, and ballsier than ever before and don't they make us laugh??!? Hats off to BBC boss Greg Dyke for having the balls to bring them back!!? Crack open the Bolly sweetie darling and let's toast the funniest thing that's ever been on television!!?! Pop??!? Glug!! Glug!! Glug!! Absolutely fantastic!!!?!

OH NO!! Not them again!!?! Those two clapped-out caricatures who never made anyone laugh the first time!!?! That's Patsy and Edina for the lucky few who missed them!?!? What's so funny about two batty old bags a-bingein' and a-whingein'!!?! All they do is get drunk and talk rubbish!!?! Who wants that??! *(You're fired.)*

Is that all you can think of, Mr Greg so-called Dyke??!? Well, pull your finger out and give us something original – like Only Fools and Horses!!?!

HATS OFF to plucky Posh for baring her soul to the nation and tellin' us all about her eating disorder!! Whatever you say, it took guts to come clean about looking like a skeleton in a mini skirt and boob tube!!?! Good on yer, Victoria!?!? It'll help the hundreds of thousands of young girls across Britain who look to you as a role model and icon!!?!

Baroness Posh of Beckham!!! How about it, Mr Blair??!?

'OO DOES she think she is??! Posh Spice aka Victoria Beckham??! Gawd 'elp us, if we hadn't had enough of her already now she's written a book??! Tell you what, Posh, I read the first page and threw up!!! Talk about *thin* stuff – Geddit??!?!

Go on, clear off and take your daft hubby with you??!? *(No offence, David, the editor tells me we might be doing a promotional deal with your agent. G.S.)*

SO SAMANTHA FOX has got a same-sex companion??!? So what??! It's a free country!?! Leave her alone, Mr Nosy Newsman a-pryin' and a-spyin' and sticking your long lens through the bedroom window. This is the Twenty-First Century!??! Or haven't you noticed???

SAM FOX is gay!!?! Well, blow me down with a feather duster!!?! Come on, Sam, let's have a few pix, please!!?! You weren't so coy in the old days!?! Our page 3 is waiting'!!! Mmmmmm!!!!

HERE THEY are — Glenda's Dishy Dames!!!

CAROL THATCHER. She told her mum to put a sock in it!!?! Why don't you shove one in your own gob while you're about it!??!

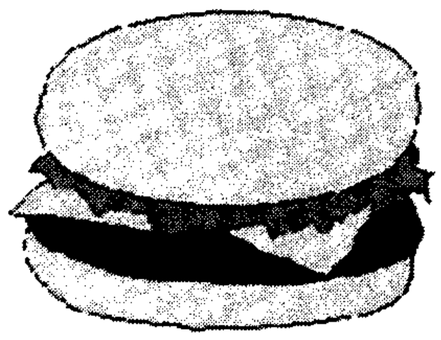
THE LATE IRIS MURDOCH. OK, so you slept with hundreds of different guys and gals!! What's so novel about that??!?

NADINE MILROY SLOAN. Crazy name and obviously extremely crazy gal??!?!

Byeeee!!

ST McDONALD'S PARISH NEWS *(formerly St Albion Parish News)*

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)



Just for this issue we have decided to replace the usual picture of the church with something a bit more modern and forward-looking. Hence this charming picture of a cheeseburger. A.C. Editor.

A POSTCARD FROM THE VICAR

Bonjour!

Or rather it isn't a particularly bon jour, thanks to a very silly story which I gather is circulating round the parish that the very modest little chateau that we are staying in, belonging to a very good friend of ours who happens to be a judge, was once used as the set for a pornographic film.

Honestly, why can't people just grow up! You would think the parishioners of St Albion's might have more important things on their mind, like the fact that there won't be any teachers at the St Albion's Primary School when the new term begins, or the fact that several parishioners are having to go to Germany to get their hips replaced.

Everybody knows that I won't have anything to do with the disgusting and perverted business of pornography. I am no more involved in pornography than my good friend Mr Desmond, who runs Dirty Des's Adult Magazine Mart in the High *Street* and has been such a keen supporter of everything we are trying to do in the parish.

It would be nice if, just for a change, Cherie and I and the boys could get away for a few months without nasty and small-minded parish gossips spreading rumours about me trying to wangle a cheapo holiday when we were in Cornwall.

I went out of my way to visit the West Country, a place that we would not normally think of going to, to set an example in the parish. You'd think the least the Nare Hotel would have done in the circumstances was to offer us a small discount, say 50 per cent – not unreasonable, is it?

Especially since our friend Mr Keane has given us a 100 per cent discount to stay here in France, as did our good friends the Count and Contessa di Fribi when we stayed at their house in Italy.

No wonder no one goes on holiday in England! It is so much more expensive than the Continent, not to mention the rain, the terrible food and the fact that it takes you forever to get there. No, for my money (or rather not!) there's nothing like La Belle France any day! Au revoir (unfortunately)

Votre ami Antoine

HARVEST FESTIVAL UPDATE

Mr Haskins writes:

Thank you for your wonderful response to my plans for our new-look harvest festival!

I have now had an even better idea.

We shall be replacing the altar for our service with a giant freezer-cabinet (supplied by courtesy of my own company Northern Foods!). This will ensure the best possible display of your harvest offerings, including any of the following "Harvest Specials": Chicken 'n' Cheese Krispy Dippers ("yes, ch-e-e-e-se!"), Pork-Style Chicken Tikka Masala ("Give us some more, Mum!"), Turkey-Flavoured Yoghurt ("Kids 'gobble" it up!").

Herring 'n' Marmite Mini-Pizzas ("I think I'm going to be sick!").

All these items are of course available to parishioners at a special discount price from my superstore on the High Street.

FURTHER THOUGHTS ON PARISH RE-ORGANISATION

A memo from Mr Birt

As part of Phase Two of my plans for rationalising the church timetable and optimising our resource management strategy, I have proposed that in the future we should amalgamate Easter and Christmas (to be known in the future as Christ-er or East-mas, according to focus group response). This is because audience figures show that these are the two "Key Events" which produce the highest ratings.

By merging them intoone "Super Event" we can look to halving the cost base (candles, trees, cribs etc.) while retaining full audience share.

Thank you, John! Keep the ideas coming! TB

Thought For The Day

How sad it always is to see friends falling out, even when they have in the past been rude about the vicar of their parish!

It is particularly sad when they resort to calling each other abusive names, such as "Fatty", "Baldy", "Hanger And Flogger" and "Euro-Lover". How even sadder it would be if people got so fed up with both of them for their childish behaviour that they decided never to have anything to do with either of them again!

Let us all hope and pray that this happens! (Is this right? A.C.)

T.B. (via email!)

We have the following message from Mrs Beckett, of our St Albion's Farming Outreach team:

Please do not contact me with any more reports about outbreaks of foot-and-mouth in the parish until I return from holiday at the end of September. Nothing can be done until then anyway (or indeed after).

M. Beckett,

La Vache Qui Brule Parc de Caravannes, Nevers-sur-Dimanche, France.

THE NEWS OF THE SCREWS

EXCLUSIVE

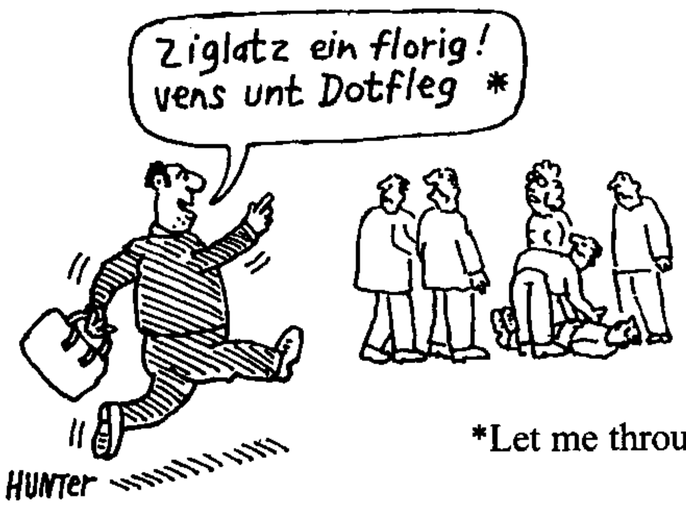
Today Nadine Milroy-Sloan opens her heart exclusively to this paper and describes her stomach-churning encounter with a well-known couple who wanted to use her to satisfy their insatiable desires! She tells us:

"Rupert Murdoch and Rebekah Wade lured me to a newspaper office in Wapping where they offered me £75,000 to join them for a perverted threesome in the paper.

"She said she'd just sit on the story but he wanted to see the full works," said Nadine, fighting back the tears.

"I was just expected to lie constantly and enjoy it," said Ms Sloan. "Now I just want to stand up and be counting my money."

© *Screws of the World in association with Max Clifford Associates*



*Let me through! I'm a foreign doctor

HUGE WAVE TO ENGULF BRITAIN

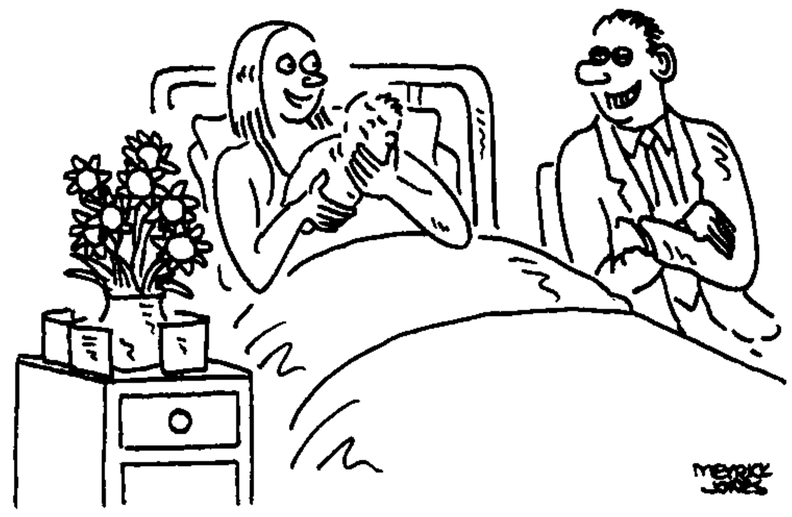
by Sue Nami

A HUGE WAVE of boredom is set to hit Britain on 12 September, scientists predict.

The wave, which will swamp the entire country, has been caused by the collapse of the Conservative Party after a huge landslide.

The catastrophic implosion of the soon-to-be-extinct Conservatives will set up earth-shattering tremors of tedium which will escalate into a monumental wave of ennui.

Experts believe that this "ZZzzunami Effect" will sweep through Britain in mid-September and could send the entire population to sleep until Christmas.



"Look – he's got your eyes, your nose, your mouth. Cloning – don't you jut love it?"

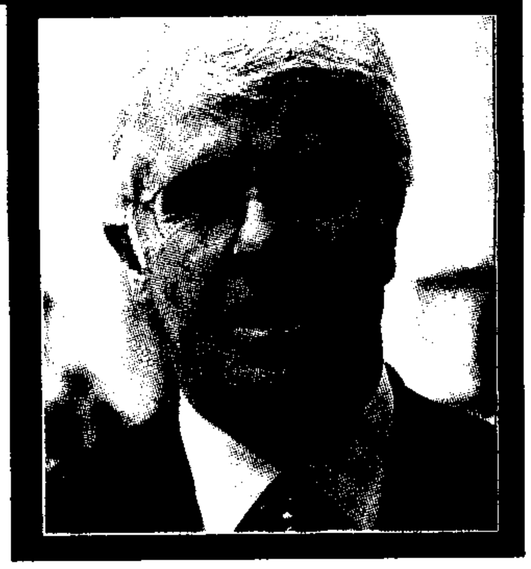
Turn Your Lies Into £££s!!

with the MAX CLIFFORD Creative Writing Course

Britain's best-selling newspapers are constantly on the look-out for untrue stories about public figures.

Could you make up a story involving a famous person or persons and something to do with kinky sex?

My agency has an unparalleled track record in placing complete bollocks on every front page in the land – and you can make £75,000 or more.



Mr M. Fuggee of Knightsbridge writes: *"He's fuggin' good, this fugger. Believe me, he's the fuggin' best in the fuggin' business."*

Just ring, fax or email a 250-word synopsis of your cock-and-bull story and within days you could have the Essex police wasting huge amounts of police time and public money.

IT'S 'MONEY FOR OLD RAPE' with MAX CLIFFORD

Celeb

LIGGER

PIXIE FROU FROU'S BEEN DRIVING ME MAD, LECTURING ME ABOUT EXPLOITING ANIMALS..
YEAH?
SHE WANTS ALL THE FAMILY TO COMPLETELY STOP USING ANY ANIMAL PRODUCTS WHATSOEVER!
OH GAWD!
DON'T BE TOO HARD ON HER... SHE'S YOUNG, GARY.. SHE'S JUST BEING A NAIVE IDEALIST...
SHE'S ALSO VERY LIPPY, MATE.
SO I MENTIONED HER COLLAGEN LIP IMPLANTS CAME FROM COW FAT AND THAT SHUT HER UP...
NICE ONE.

News In Brief

REFUGEES TURNED AWAY

NO ONE was horrified today as a group of political refugees, described by one onlooker as the Tory party, was turned away by the British people.

Despite warnings from everyone they refused to change course and sailed headlong onto the rocks.

"It's not as if we feel sorry for these people," said one voter. "But if we let these types into power the country really will go to the dogs."

The Tory Party is 100 (days away from self-destructing).

'I WOKE UP DURING OPERATION' – SHOCK CLAIM

A JUNIOR doctor shocked the medical establishment today when he claimed to have woken up twice whilst performing surgery on a patient.

"I thought I was well and truly *under,"* said the doctor, "but when I woke up I was in an operating theatre and there was nothing I could do about it."

An NHS spokesman said that everything was being done to extend his shifts to ensure that something like this would never happen again.

TORY LEADERSHIP TIMETABLE IN FULL

August 22 to September 7

Regional Hustings Meetings – each candidate will speak and answer questions from audiences.

September 11

Leadership ballot closes at noon.

September 12

Result Declared.

June 2005

Lose General Election.

That Duncan Smith Bonsai Family Tree In Full

The Mikado
|
Emperor Hirohito
|
Prince Rah Twing Looni
|
Admiral Dunkin-Donuts (US Navy)
|
Madame Butterfly
|
Kurosawa Duncan Smith
|
Fuwotascorcha Duncan Smith
|
Kamikaze Duncan Smith
|
U-Turn-On-Geishas Duncan Smith

(That's enough Japanese ancestors. Ed.)

Coming soon

THE KING AND IDS

TOUCHING story of the bald, part-Japanese despot (Iain Duncan Smith) who falls in love with the bossy English nanny (Mrs Thatcher). Hit songs include:

"Getting to know you (because we hadn't heard of you till recently)"

"Shall we lose?"

"Hello, young Tories, wherever you are (we think your numbers are few)"

"Whistle a crappy tune"

"We kiss in the Shadow Cabinet"

(That's enough songs)

Cast In Full
Iain Duncan Smith **YUL BRYNNER**
Margaret Thatcher **PENELOPE KEITH**

Also coming soon

"THE MAGNIFICENT SVEN"

starring **YUL BRYNNER** (again)

A charismatic leader (Sven) assembles a group of hopeless deadbeats to take on the bullyboys and triumphs against all the odds.

The HAMILTONS
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS... I DO NOT BELIEVE IT!!
PEOPLE
OH WHAT DEAR... WHAT HAVE THEY PRINTED NOW?
MAIL
NOTHING! ABSOLUTELY NOTHING! WE'RE NOT IN ANY OF THEM!
JK

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

NO. 94
ROLF HARRIS

Would you say that there was a distinctively Australian type of spoon?

We Australians are very down-to-earth people. We call a spoon a spoon.

You're a very versatile performer. You paint, act, compose, play musical instruments and rescue animals...

Yes, I suppose I am pretty brilliant. But, like any other great artist, I've had to pay the price in terms of my personal life. There have been a lot of women, I can tell you. But that's what being a world-famous celebrity who plays the digeridoo is all about.

So, to get back to spoons, have you ever used them in your veterinary work?

Animals love me instinctively. Just like women. I think it may be my painting, or my acting ability, or my playing the digeridoo... It's not been easy. I've suffered a lot for my art, you know.

You seem to find it hard to talk about spoons?

Everything is hard when you're an artist. Everything in life is hard. When you look at one of those dear little chihuahuas, struggling for life, looking up at you with those great big eyes, begging you to save it, as only you can, the last thing you think about is spoons, let me tell you.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

No.

NEXT WEEK: Me And My Mobile Phone – Sue Lawley.

"Oh, no – we're both wearing the same dress"

TV Highlights

Yes, Prime Minister
UK Gold Tuesday 9.30 pm

More far-fetched satire as Sir Humphrey (Nigel Hawthorne) convinces the hapless PM Tony Blair (Paul Eddington) to award Sir Humphrey an incredible 50% pay rise whilst other public servants such as nurses get a 2% rise.

Eye Rating – Total farce

I Can't Believe We Watched That
BBC1 11.00 pm

A look back at hilariously bad television from the last few decades.

I Can't Believe We Watched I Can't Believe We Watched That
BBC1 11.00 pm

A look back at hilariously bad television from half an hour ago.

POLLY FILLER

An open letter to KATE WINSLET

Dear Kate

YOU should be ashamed of yourself! You've betrayed all of us working mothers who struggle to combine career and children without being slaves to male expectations about our appearance!

Honestly! How *dare* you lose weight after all the support we've given you over the years! When you ballooned up to 27 stone I wrote that it was no one's business but your own if you wanted to stuff in the cream cakes and look like the back of a bus. You were a role model, I said, for all of us who refused to kow-tow to the Fat Police. You're Absolutely Flabulous, I wrote in a celebration of your unashamed ampleness.

But now you have kicked your sisters in the teeth, given in to Hollywood land, slimmed down to a waif-like ten stone. What message is that, Kate, for ordinary women with children who can't afford fancy diets and fashionable therapies!

HOW many times do we have to say this? It doesn't matter what you look like – we can't all be a size eight like me. And we can't all hit the ideal weight of 8 stone (though I have!).

You're making women feel unhappy by flaunting your new movie star body all over the glossy magazines.

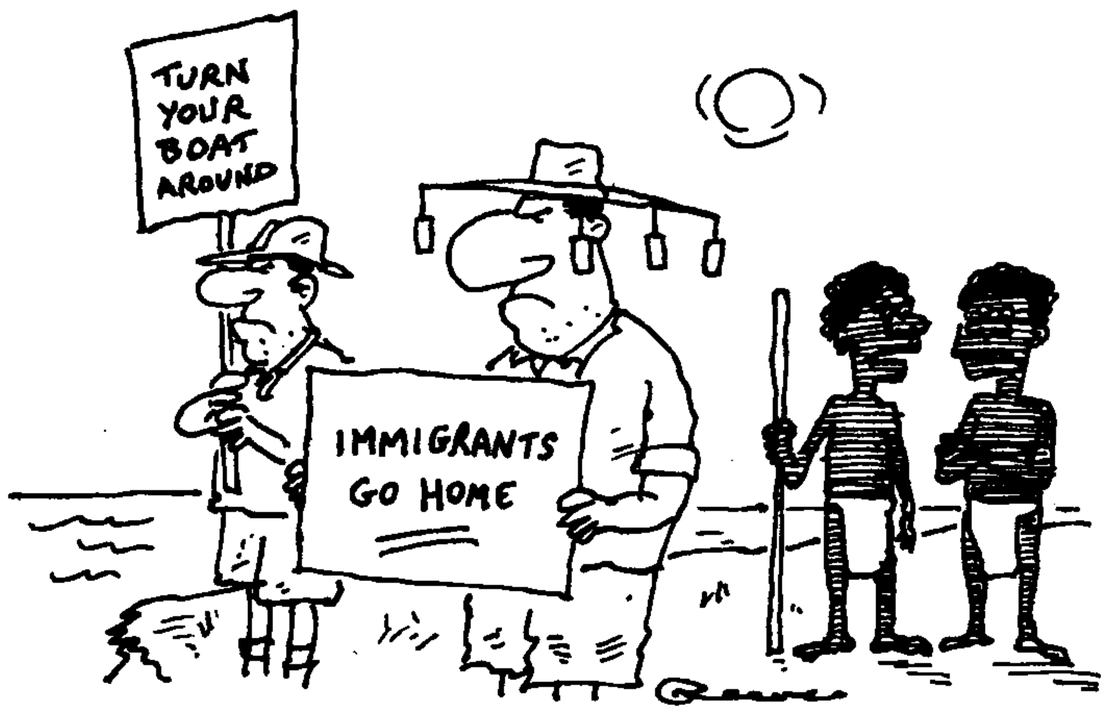
We loved you a lot more Kate when you were the size of an iceberg and my partner Simon said, "No wonder the Titanic sank with *her* on board," when we were watching the repeat on the SkyFoxGold Repeat Channel. Even my toddler Charlie preferred you when he charmingly remarked, "Mummy – why is that fat girl a famous film star when you are so much thinner and more beautiful that she is?" (Huh! Kids!)

So Kate Thinslet – stop being so obsessed with your weight. We're just *not interested*!!

Yours in sisterhood,

Polly Filler

THE ASYLUM
SEEKER PROBLEM
I MEAN YOU HAVE TO ADMIRE AUSTRALIA, AT LEAST THEY STICK TO THEIR GUNS UNLIKE SOME!
WE'RE INSANE ABOUT FILM
CINEMA 1 2 3
I'M SORRY FOR THE POOR SODS BUT THEY DON'T ADJUST TO OUR WAY OF LIFE
RIGHT! ALL THEY DO IS CART THEIR KIDS 'ROUND THE UNDERGROUND, BEGGING AN' NICKIN'. I'M SORRY AN' ALL THAT, BUT I NEVER GIVE 'EM NOTHING
I'M NO WAY A RACIST BUT THEY'RE ALL GYPSIES AND ANYWAY THEY ALL HATE EACH OTHER. I THINK THEY SHOULD BE SENT BACK
POPCORN
MAKE UP YOUR MIND, DICKBRAIN!
IF BLAIR HAD ANY GUTS HE'D DO THE SAME, INSTEAD OF GIVING THEM OUR MONEY AND FREE HOUSING. THERE'S NO ROOM HERE FOR ANY MORE PEOPLE!
THAT'S ALL VERY WELL, BUT WHO WOULD WE GET TO WORK THE CINEMAS, HOTELS, COFFEE OUTLETS, BINGO HALLS, MASSAGE PARLOURS...
£20
JOKE
SMALL
LARGE
XLARGE
ELEPHANT



"Why didn't we think of that?"

NURSERY TIMES

Jumblies Refused Permission To Land

by Edward Fear

A BOATLOAD of green-headed, blue-handed asylum-seekers, known as "jumblies", were refused permission to land yesterday as fears grew that their craft, the SS Sieve, was "unseaworthy" and "unhygienic".

The origins of the jumblies are uncertain and an Australian spokesman would only say, "The lands where they live are far and few. The only thing we know about these people is their heads are green and their hands are blue. And we don't want their sort here."

The boat is now heading to the Hills of Chankly Bore, where they have been promised asylum.

'sdjf aslkjf alsdf hlkas alskaslk alks lkjhasd fkajshdf lakdh flkjh lkjasa'

Grauniad (Europ) p. 1

Naked romp at Kinki police academy

South China Morning Post

The Daily Thomas

It's Absolutely Fatuous!

by David Mail

AS ANOTHER series of pieces by David Thomas returns to the *Daily Mail*, we ask, "Has he gone off?" In the early days it was mildly amusing – Thomas filling up space with his articles about the summer holidays and what's on the telly. We all enjoyed his hysterical prose and his catch-phrase "Yes, Mr Dacre. I'll have a thousand words for you by lunchtime."

"But now the joke has worn thin," said Jennifer Saunders. "Why can't the Mail come up with some new columnists? Surely there must be someone else to fill up all those pages" *(cont. p. 94)*

POSH SETS BAD EXAMPLE

by Our Celebrity Staff **Pierce Organ**

VICTORIA Beckham was yesterday accused of setting a bad example to middle-aged editors across the country by appearing with a lip-ring in public.

"Editors are very susceptible to this sort of thing," said a fashion expert. "And as soon as one of them inserts a pathetic non-story about Posh Spice into their paper they all start doing it."

Evidence that this was the case came from *Sun* editor David Hello, who said, "Of course I put in a lip-ring story. I put it right at the front of my paper. But so did all the other editors."

Ring of Truth

And when the lip-ring story later turned out to be "a fake" no one at the *Sun*, *Mirror*, *Mail*, *Telegraph* or *Guardian* was in any way embarrassed.

"So what?" said Alan Rubbisher. "As long as it gets us noticed then why shouldn't *(cont. p. 94)*

ROY of ENGLAND

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Christiaan Barnard, South African surgeon

So. Farewell
Then
Christiaan Barnard.

You were
Famous for
Putting organs
Into other people.

Sometimes
Hearts.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

The Daily Torygraph
Britain's biggest-selling quality daily
Friday, September 7, 2001

New Poll Shows Massive Lead for Duncan Smith

BY OUR TORY CAMPAIGN STAFF
CONRAD BLACKMAIL

A SHOCK POLL of Tory activists shows that 95 per cent of them are backing Iain Duncan Smith to be the new Tory leader.

The poll will come as a devastating blow to supporters of Kenneth Clarke, many of whom are likely to commit suicide when they read it.

Drunken Clarke

The poll, carried out by the independent Daily Torygraph, was based on telephone interviews with a random sample of 20 committed IDS supporters.

They were asked:

"Who would you rather see leading the Tory Party to victory at the next election? A. Iain Duncan Smith. B. Iain Duncan Smith."

Astonishingly, over 100 per cent of those questioned chose Iain Duncan Smith over his fat,

Duncan Smith

lazy, clapped-out, useless rival whose name the Daily Torygraph is not allowed to print.

Clarke in rape shock

KENNETH CLARKE, a contender for the Tory leadership, was last night accused of having walked through a field of rape while soliciting the votes of the West Country farmers.

Looking flustered, Mr Clarke last night said that he "knew nothing" about the rape episode, and that it must all have been made up by "the Duncan Smith dirty tricks department" (Daily Torygraph).

On other pages
Saddam and Milosevic back Clarke 8
Clarke "may have started Foot-and-Mouth" 10
Overweight smokers make disastrous Party leaders (except for Churchill), by our Medical Correspondent Dr James Le Fanu 12
Why Bald Is the New Hairy, says Fashion Editor Alexandra Shulman 14
IDS Could Be Greatest Tory Leader Since Thatcher, says TV's Charles Moore 16

Daily Hate Mail
Friday September 7, 2001 NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

NEW RACE ROW ENGULFS DUNCAN SMITH

By Our Tory Campaign Staff
Lord Rothersmear

IAN DUNCAN SMITH'S campaign for the Tory leadership last night faced total collapse following fresh allegations about links with neo-Nazis.

The *Daily Mail* has learned that the uncle of one of Mr Duncan Smith's top aides once went to a meeting addressed by Enoch Powell in 1973.

No Hair Hitler

The revelation of this Fascist link could be the final nail in the coffin of the Duncan Smith campaign.

A clearly rattled Mr Duncan Smith last night ordered that his Nazi aide should be immediately sacked from his team.

But it was too late to stop the

Duncan Smith

damage. Said one Tory grandee (Lord Rothersmear), "I have told my man Dacre to have nothing more to do with this right-wing extremist fellow Smith."

"The Daily Mail did not get where it is today by supporting Adolf Hitler, except in the thirties."

Queen Mum Backs Clarke

SOURCES close to Clarence House were last night indicating that the Queen Mother, who more than anyone else helped Britain to win the war, is thinking of throwing her weight behind Kenneth Clarke's bid for the Tory leadership.

The Queen Mum is known to see Mr Clarke as very much a kindred spirit, fond of "a tipple, a smoke and the occasional £1000 each way on the second favourite at Fontwell Park".

Of course the Queen Mother is bound by the Constitution not to allow her political preferences to be made public, but so important does she feel it to be for Britain's future that Mr Clarke becomes Tory leader that on this occasion she has graciously given permission to the *Daily Hatemail* to make it up.

On Other Pages Posh And Becks Join Clarke Bandwagon As They Rechristen Brooklyn "Kenclarke" **18-26** Sven-Goran Eriksson To Play Clarke In Crucial World Cup Qualifier **76** "Fat Is The New Thin" – Femail Special **94** "Why Smoking Improves Your Leadership Potential" – Hatemail Health Survey Shows **46** Why Ken Could Be The Greatest Tory Leader Of All Time. writes Paul Dacre **10**

Literary Review

Malik aforethought

Fury
Salman Rushdie
(Cape, £16.99)

A NEW Rushdie novel is always an event, and since *Fury* is a big turkey the event this time must be Christmas. Salman celebrates in style: he's stuffed his half-baked flightless bird with mashed up old chestnuts and seasoned it with an incongruous mixture of oriental spices and TV-snack ketchup. And yet how proudly he dedicates it to that other new dish in his life, Padma Lakshmi.

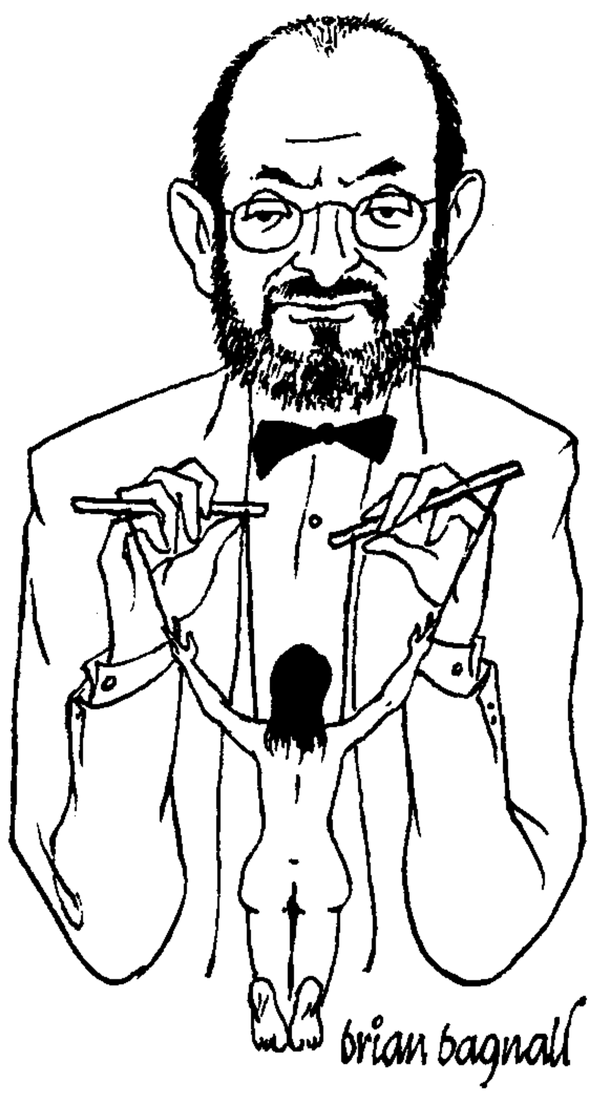
Regrettably some readers may suffer an Islamic extremist-like failure of the imagination when it comes to differentiating the story in the novel, about a 50-something Bombay-born British intellectual called Malik Solanka who abandons his wife and child in London and ends up in New York as the toast of the town with a stunningly attractive young Asian babe on his arm, from the rather undissimilar facts of his creator's own recent life.

They will be embarrassed to read, of Malik's ex-wife, "If she had a failing, it was that she didn't give blow jobs." They'll soon work out why this pun-mad author has called her pulchritudinous replacement Neela (*geddit?*). Professor Solanka, we learn, likes "using the material of his own life and immediate surroundings and, by the alchemy of art, making it strange." Hmm. Very strange.

But *Fury* is not *Intimacy*, its author some curious amalgam named Salif Kureishdie. Oh no. It's actually a reworking (ie rehash) of the few contents of the myth-kitty not already stolen by Salman for his modernised, globalised, airport-sagafied version of the Orpheus legend, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (see *Eye* 974).

This one mentions Apollo and Pytho, Orestes and Clytemnestra, Nike, Circe, Galatea, Midas, Croesus, Finn MacCool and Vishnu. But it centres on the Furies or "Eumenides". Malik's ex-wife Eleanor is furious with him; so is his muse Mila and his girlfriend Neela. Through careful plotting (ie sheer contrivance) they all end up in the same bedroom, Malik facing his critics at last in what might have been forceful farce. But the resulting denouement is feeble, for these latterday Furies are a trio of petulant kittens.

Conflated with the Furies theme are concepts of "furia", or creative energy, and simple bloody-minded rage. Malik suffers from fits of anger so total he cannot later remember what he said or did in



them. (In a sub-plot which peters out rather pathetically, he fears he might be the perpetrator of a series of slayings luridly reported in the tabloids.) But why is Malik so furious? A "protean" character (ie he fulfils whatever profile the narrative currently requires), he is a professor of philosophy who has achieved global success through a TV show featuring a precocious doll called Little Brain. Is he angry because the BBC took his idea and dumbed it down? (It was pretty dumb already, even by Rushdie's glowing account of it.) Or is it because of the bad things that happen to his friends? Or because of (wait for it: groan) childhood sexual abuse?

Inspired by Mila, the professor embarks on another dolly project, a science fiction save-the-planet soap-epic called Puppet Kings, which (hey presto) becomes an internet-driven overnight success. In love with Neela, he pursues her to her South Sea homeland where ethnic violence (more fury) has broken out. Guess what: the rebels are all wearing masks based on Solanka's new puppets. Uncanny. But if Rushdie intends to say something deep about dolls, puppets, masks and manipulation (human, mechanical or divine), it is somewhat marred by his own obvious manipulation of an increasingly implausible tale. The overall effect is sound and fury, signifying nothing. The descriptions of New York are hackneyed (the architecture is jumbled and phoney); the characters comic-book (Neela's beauty is so arresting it causes traffic accidents; a chap is called Horse because he's well-hung); the observations obvious (a dead body on the street looks like a broken doll); the humour feeble (several people are given Polish names so that Rushdie can later insert a pun about "pole position").

Clichés abound: one young man's life is "freighted with tragedy"; another is a "gifted composer of music". There are chestnuts like "where the hormones, there moan I" and then he reiterates that old one about how one might admire Philip Roth's talent after writing *Portnoy's Complaint* but one wouldn't want to shake his hand. Oh dear.

For all his highbrow reachings, Rushdie's grasp is ultimately middlebrow. Currying intellectual favour through classical allusions and literary references, he also tries to add a splash of street cred with references to film, music, popular culture and politics and by dropping the names of fellow celebs. How else could E M Forster, Tony Soprano, Tiger Woods and Godzilla all end up in the same novel? Rushdie hopes that someone somewhere will relish at least one of these connections.

One more from the kitty: according to the Oxford dictionary of world mythology, Lakshmi, the lotus goddess of Hindu mythology, is a symbol of her husband Vishnu's creative energy and "her full breasts are a constant source of succour and delight." No wonder Salman looks so smug.

Hollywooden

Coldheart Canyon
Clive Barker
(HarperCollins, £16.99)

IT TAKES only the merest glance at the trappings of *Coldheart Canyon* (subtitled "A Hollywood Ghost Story") to become aware that one is in the presence of an artefact that takes itself very seriously indeed.

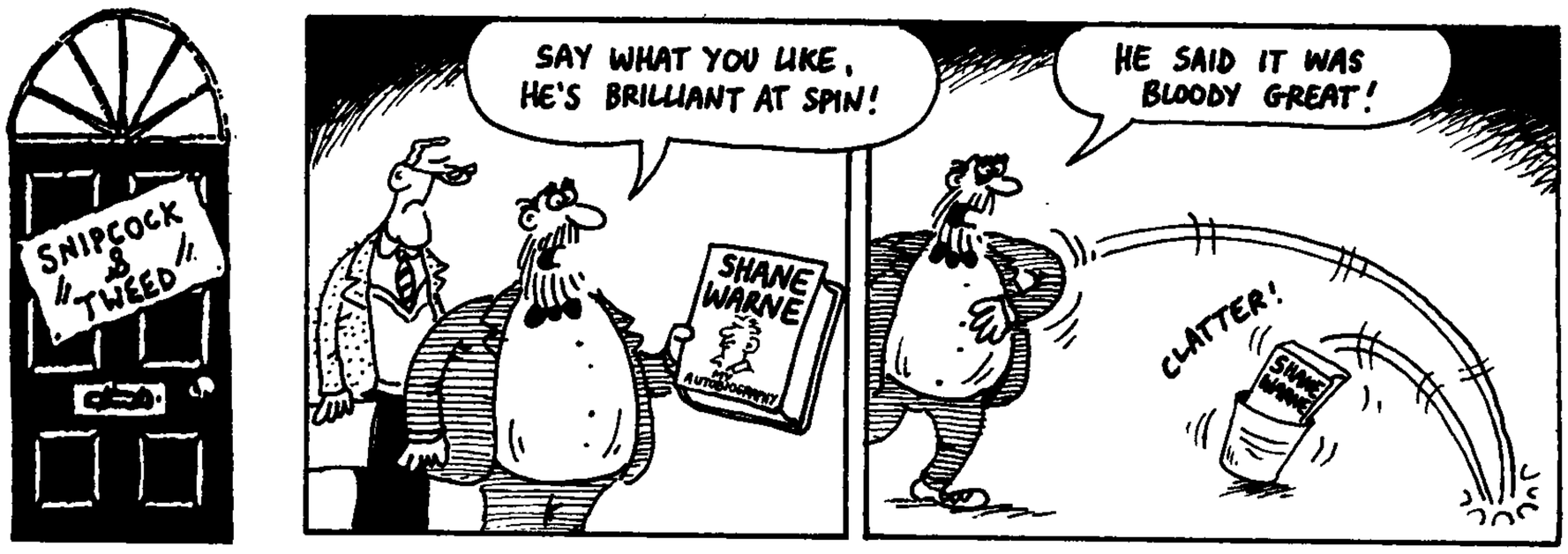
For a start there is the jacket-flap photo of the author — 'tache, evening dress, swept-back brilliantined hair — doing an uncannily accurate imitation of a Wilde-era decadent. Then there is the three-page prefatory round of cap-doffing thank-yous containing, among other embarrassments, a paean to his editor so effusive that if I were that lady I should be thinking seriously of going ex-directory.

Finally, there is the book itself – buxom, portentous, overblown, full of the naughtiest hardcore jollies – and entirely po-faced. The distinguishing mark of practically all the horror-schlock practitioners, of whom Mr Barker is such a distinctive tribune, is their sense of absolute conviction; and perhaps the most disturbing thing about *Coldheart Canyon*, apart from the hours Mr Barker must have put in to write it, is its complete lack of humour.

The plot goes like this. The career of Todd Pickett, a stalwart but ageing piece of Hollywood beefcake, is on the slide. A new wave of tight-assed youngsters is stomping the Bel Air boardwalks, his face is cragging up and the head studio weasel has proposed cosmetic surgery. The op goes wrong, leaving him looking like a napalm victim. To avoid the attentions of a prurient media our man opts to shack up in a deserted mansion deep in the Hollywood hills. Here, late one balmy West Coast evening, he comes across Katya, a miraculously preserved vamp from the era of the silent screen who just happens to preside over some nightly debauches attended by the, um, "ghosts" of every dead movie star you care to think of.

Nodding approval of Katya's sturdy "I don't believe in *thou shall not*" philosophisings, and raising an eyebrow or two over extant pictures of the real-life excess that these spirit-world gatherings memorialise, Todd buckles to with Ava, Gary and co and has a tremendous time. However, various other sinewy limbs are stirring in the woodshed. The basement turns out to contain Duke Goga's "Hunt of the Devil", would you believe – a tiled representation of ancient Romanian legend into whose real-life reemergence Katya's guest unwittingly strays.

Meanwhile plump Tammy, Todd's fan club president, is out in the hills narrowly avoiding death at the hands of some attendant "hybrids" (the, ah, debased progeny of couplings between dead movie idols and the local animal population) before being



rescued by Katya's ex-manager, who imagines that he's finally chanced on a way of upsetting his evil mistress's applecart...

The point about this farrago of — let us be frank — rather nasty-minded nonsense is not that it is preposterous, but that it is *doggedly* preposterous (literally so in the somewhat superfluous 30 pages given to the death of Todd's dog Dempsey, apparently shoehorned in as a tribute to the passing of one of Barker's own pets). Mr Barker takes pains with his endless sex scenes, with his chill, other-worldly breaths, his hairy goat-boys being pinioned by the Duke's rapier and so on.

There are times, notably in the orgy sequences, when he gets so excited that the language turns almost Biblical in its gravity. Thus at one stage, when Todd is being inducted into the Canyon's carnal routines, Katya whips up her dress "so that he could have sight of her", going on, a tad later, to perform a particularly adroit anatomical manoeuvre "so that he could have full disclosure of her". So that he could have *what*? Perhaps I was wrong, and Mr Barker does have a sense of humour after all.

The really dismal thing about *Coldheart Canyon*, of course, apart from the fact that it will sell in truck-loads, is that it isn't remotely scary. Every horror comes trailed in advance – even the discovery and transportation of the Romanian tiles merits a 40-page prequel. Economy, precision, atmosphere — all those time-honoured ingredients found in the works of classic scare-mongerers such as Sheridan Le Fanu and M.R. James – are ignored in favour of length, overkill and bluster.

Historians of the ghost/horror genre often locate its origins in the tale-telling fat boy of the *Pickwick Papers* who informs his listeners that "I wants to make your flesh creep". The only thing creeping here is reader interest — away out of the exit door before, long before the closing credits have rolled.

Books & Bookmen

■ *EXPRESS* boss Richard Desmond's falling out with Posh Spice (she gave serialisation of her autobiography to the *Mail* titles) has opened the way for Dirty Des to forge an alliance with John Blake, the pop columnist turned pap publisher.

Desmond's decision not only to serialise *Victoria's Secrets*, Virginia Blackburn's dull cuttings job on Posh published by John Blake Ltd, but also to promote it to his readers will provide a useful sales boost for the mullet-haired former hack who would otherwise have seen his title totally eclipsed by the *Mail-Hello!* backed official biography.

Blake's ability to conjure books from almost anywhere at high speed and with little concern about facts is a philosophy the *Express* publisher can relate to, and the tie-up is likely to be the first of many (until the demented Desmond eventually falls out with Blake, that is).

■ *A NUMBER of critics have been keen to list the, er, influences on Salman Rushdie's pisspoor new novel,* Fury.

Phillip Roth, Hanif Kureshi, Tom Wolfe, Blake Morrison, Woody Allen, Bret Easton Ellis and the film Being John Malkovich *have all been cited. But they seem to have missed are particularly scholarly "homage". The character of the girl who is so beautiful that she causes traffic accidents seems to be very similar to the girl who does exactly this in the Kronenberg beer adverts.*

Usually it is lazy admen who borrow ideas from books and films. Could this be the first example of a reverse process?

■ THE departure of Cameron Brown from Collins & Brown, the illustrated publisher he co-founded with Mark Collins, comes as no great surprise. Brown is an entrepreneur, so being someone else's employee — not even in a position as elevated as deputy chairman of John Needleman's Chrysalis Books group — was never going to suit him.

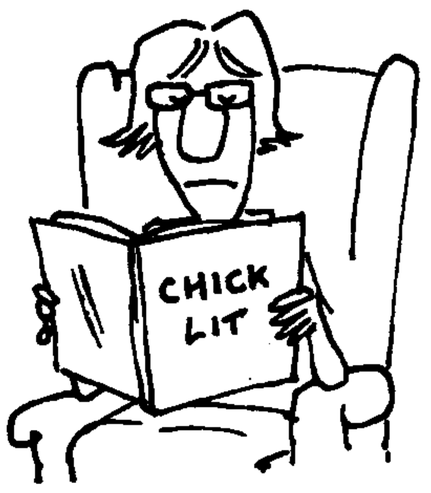
This, however, was just what he was after C&B was forced into Needleman's arms earlier in the year, having got its fingers burnt by its ill-timed decision to put all of its content online under the IllustratedLibrary.com banner, just as the dotcom sector was beginning to nosedive.

Presumably the prospect of moving from C&B's plush riverside offices in Battersea to Chrysalis' grim industrial estate home behind King's Cross station will have had some bearing on Brown's decision to resign as well.

When it comes to expansion, Needleman is a seasoned ambulance-chaser and his takeover of C&B was almost a carbon copy of the way he took over Robson, BT Batsford, Salamander and Quadrillion. All had hit rocky patches and were on the verge of going under when Needleman stepped in, cutting jobs and moving the companies under one roof, alongside his Ramboro remainder business.

Some in the trade, however, question the business sense of this strategy. Sure, Chrysalis Books has grown massively in turnover over the last three years, but can the acquisition of under-performing companies work in profit terms? A few have noted a slowing of the group's payment cycle: never a good sign. Brown's tendency, rather refreshingly in a world as mired in creative accounting as books, was always to refuse to gloss over bad financial results when they came. It will be interesting to see if Needleman is as candid if Chrysalis begins to unravel slightly.

■ IN recent years a comedy enthusiast and bore called Robert Ross has cornered the market in books



about British comedy of a certain vintage — primarily Carry On films and the Goodies.

Thus when Joan Sims died recently, Ross was all over the media, touting himself as "co-author" of her autobiography, *High Spirits*, while lavishing praise on his late collaborator.

But he was less keen to advertise the fact that while he had indeed been involved with the project at the start, editors at Transworld's Partridge imprint swiftly sacked him, having found him too wedded to his hackneyed, gushing style to be a successfully anonymous ghost-writer.

Experienced ghost Sean Magee was then brought in to start again from scratch, but not before Ross had pocketed his full fee.

'Bookworm'

Pseuds Corner

The film lasts a fraction too long. You cannot keep reacting with bliss to moments that demand it; fatigue sets in. But the experience is still unforgettable: both paradisical and pre-lapsarian. There must have been a moment when the world had not yet sorted out its sounds and colours, when creation was an artist's palette or composer's scoresheet pregnant with every possibility not yet ruled out by taste, decorum, usage, tradition. A pre-cognitive Eden mad with outlaw beauty. That is Tears of the Black Tiger.

NIGEL ANDREWS
Financial Times

Service was convivial yet unfailingly attentive, and the food the culinary equivalent of full-on, exhibitionist sex with a first date, who then does your laundry.

MARION McGILVARY
***the business* [FT Weekend Magazine]**

To think about a large town or city is not an exercise in collage, jump-cutting from the skyline around St Paul's to the jut of Big Ben and then to Canary Wharf tower. Instead, we are sucked into something denser that is rampantly inclusive rather than exclusive. To live or work in a city is to be involved in a kind of psycho-drama whose landscape is both real in detail and unreal in general.

JAY MERRICK
Independent

Pseuds Corporate

As a living logo, we invite visitors to our web-site to share in the MBS experience.

The purple box provides a solid structure where individuals can place their own inspiration. We aim to create an environment in which ideas can flourish.

We create an environment. We direct, instruct and encourage. But it is our audiences and stakeholders who carry us forward. It is your ideas and imagination which propel us.

Be creative, be flexible, and be inclusive. Impress your personality on the School by designing your own logo with us.

Manchester Business School
'design a logo' web-site page

It is as though the image of the highly desirable male person has described a demographic semicircle, from ageing savoir-faire to the open-eyed innocence and perfect symmetry of Picasso's Eternal Boy, a portrait for which [Ewen] McGregor might easily have sat.

SALLY VINCENT
Guardian

Our foremost cartographer of fictional topographies.

WILL SELF, quoted on the dust jacket of Jim Crace's new novel

Contributors: Brian Ross-Meering, Jo Lloyd, Strobes, V.J. Dutchman-Smith, C.J. Apperley, "Ian"

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

ADELPHI: TAKING OVER THE ASYLUM

THE activities of Adelphi Hotels, the firm nominated by the home office to provide accommodation for "dispersed" asylum-seekers, are not confined to Plymouth where an unseemly row with sub-contractors led to the eviction and disorientation of some 20 asylum-seekers.

Following the *Eye*'s recent disclosures (1034), information has flooded in from other parts of the country where other sub-contractors have been less than happy with Adelphi Hotels. The consistent theme is that Adelphi Hotels has sub-contracted the accommodation of asylum-seekers to local landlords and then failed to pay them as promised. The result is that the sub-contractors have been forced out of business or obliged to pass the work back to Adelphi.

In Bideford, north Devon, Anthony Collins, an Independent councillor on Torridge district council, has been a landlord for many years. He recently switched much of his business from housing students to accommodating asylum-seekers and duly brought some of his properties up to the standards required by the home office.

He contracted with a Plymouth company, ASM, to house asylum-seekers, but was shocked when ASM could not pay him on time because, it said, it had not been paid by Adelphi. He had a call from a director of Adelphi Hotels who told him Adelphi was not getting its due payments from the home office – but the director nevertheless advised the councillor to shift his business away from ASM and work with Adelphi instead.

As early as 20 August last year Mr Peter Butterworth, a director of Norwest Property Services in Wrexham, wrote a series of desperate letters to Falko Przborowski, then a director of Adelphi Hotels, complaining that his company had not been paid for providing accommodation for asylum-seekers as agreed, though the work had been done. "Do you gain pleasure from confusing payment issues and breaking contracts?" he asked, demanding immediate payment of a delayed instalment. The dispute was resolved and Mr Butterworth now works for Adelphi Hotels.

On 9 February this year the three directors of Coventry landlords 21st Century Estates wrote an angry letter to Alan Mortimer, director of internal audit at the home office, complaining of the "disgraceful and appalling behaviour of Adlephi Hotels" in withholding payments and threatening to "terminate" the agreement to house asylum-seekers in Coventry. The directors wrote: "The payment they are withholding amounts to approximately £150,000 and without this money we are unable to pay our staff or fulfil the full provision of services." The letter to Mr Mortimer included a fax from Rodney Hotham, a director of Adelphi, to the effect that an inspection of the relevant properties run by 21st Century indicated that home office standards were not being met. As a result, payment for a full quarter was being held back.

This is the background to the dispute in Plymouth, where Adelphi has used exactly the same tactics against ASM: withholding payments, alleging poor housing standards, "terminating" the original agreement and taking over the business. ASM is suing Adelphi in the high court for £160,000, demanding to know when and how much the home office paid Adelphi under the head contract.

Charles Knapper, a Plymouth solicitor whose wife is a director of ASM, tells the *Eye*: "ASM have consistently asked for details of the payments by the home office to Adelphi, and have consistently been refused the information." The *Eye* asked Adelphi how much it had received from the home office. In reply, Mike Holland, managing director of Adelphi, rang to protest about the *Eye*'s "wildly inaccurate" earlier article — but not to provide the figures of home office payments to his company. Instead he provided a phone number where neither he nor any of his fellow directors was available.

Some of the lucrative business of accommodating asylum-seekers in Plymouth has been taken over by a new company, Adelphi Midland Estates, which was set up in February by two directors of Adelphi Hotels, Mike Holland and Stephen French. The new company has bought a block of flats on Raglan Road in Devonport. The sale has sparked local fears of ghetto-isation of asylum-seekers, as at Sighthill in Glasgow. Plymouth council's housing spokesman David James has made it clear that councillors don't want great numbers of asylum-seekers to be herded into one area, but there is nothing the elected local authority can do about it.

The purchase of the Raglan Road flats has led to the eviction of large numbers of students who have been told to move their belongings out of their rooms. When the former landlords were told that many students, now abroad or on holiday, had left their possessions in their rooms, they replied that the possessions would have to be sold off because Adelphi had made them an offer they could not refuse.

Mike Holland, managing director of Adelphi, who paid himself £278,000 in Adelphi Hotels' first year of operation, is a well-known property developer in Brighton and Hove. In February 1999, the *Brighton Argus* reported that a new company called Cherrywood, run by Mike Holland, was set to develop an old mansion, Stanmer House, into luxury flats, an art gallery and a disablement centre. The scheme was enthusiastically endorsed by the then Brighton council leader, Steve Bassam.

Steve Bassam is now Lord Bassam and was the home office minister who answered questions in the Lords last year about the government's dispersal system for asylum-seekers. He is now a government whip in the Lords. Asked about any connection with Mike Holland, he told the *Eye*: "I remember Stanmer Park and the company involved seemed a fairly reputable one, but I've never met Mike Holland. Anyway, I had nothing to do with nominating the companies for accommodating asylum-seekers. It was not part of my brief. Ministers have nothing to do with procurement of companies in such cases."

The *Eye* asked the home office a number of detailed questions about the complaints from ASM, 21st Century Estates and other companies, and asked what was done about them. The not very detailed reply was as follows: "The home office cannot comment on any contractual relationships which are subject to commercial confidence. All providers are required to maintain full and accurate financial records and they are subject to regular contract reviews. The home office can confirm that complaints were received about the operations of certain aspects of one of the NASS accommodation contracts. They were thoroughly investigated and found to be without substance. The home office notes that there have been legal proceedings between Adelphi and one of its sub-contractors and that it has been resolved with the termination of the contract."

DOWN TRODDEN

THE merger of the Halifax with the Bank of Scotland is sure to lead to a haemorrhage of jobs in both *organisations* – especially the bank, whose slogan is "a friend for life" and which operates a notional "no redundancies" policy.

The bank is likely to try to solve its problems by "sickening out", a novel alternative to the costly business of sacking people. Sickening out means moving unwanted staff to jobs they can't do or don't like, thus driving them cheaply out of employment.

Before the bank engages on such a policy, however, it should recall the case of its former secretary, Joan Blake. Mrs Blake was suddenly told there was no more work for her as a secretary, so she was being reclassified as a customer service officer. She found to her horror that she was completely untrained for this job, which involved, among other things, selling bank products of which she had no knowledge to people she didn't know.

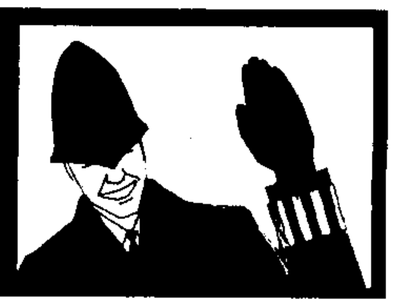
She became ill, and consulted her union, then BIFU, now UNIFI. The union was advised in the strongest possible terms by its Glasgow lawyers, Thompsons, that Mrs Blake hadn't a hope in hell of wining a case for unfair constructive dismissal at an industrial tribunal. So she took the case herself.

Mrs Joan Blake

In May 1999 the tribunal unanimously found for Mrs Blake and awarded her £6,678 damages against the bank. The tribunal was unimpressed by the bank's argument that Mrs Blake's contract allowed her to be moved to another job, and regarded the way she was moved, and made ill, as a deliberate attempt by the bank to "sicken out" its employee in order to avoid redundancy pay.

Bill Duncan, the senior BOS manager, did not give evidence (he was off playing golf on the day of the hearing); and the tribunal was very contemptuous of the evidence of his junior, David Trodden, remarking that on every occasion where their evidence clashed, they preferred the version of Mrs Blake to that of Mr Trodden.

Police 5 BLACK AND BLUE



EVER since its formation, the National Black Police Association (NBPA) and its associate association in the Metropolitan area have irritated the police authorities by taking seriously the allegations of discrimination made by black policemen.

Among the cases it has supported have been several familiar to *Eye* readers — such as those of Joy Hendricks and Gurpal Virdi. There was a bit of a celebration in police newspapers such as the *Daily Mail*, therefore, when the former vice chairman of the NBPA and its legal adviser, Superintendent Ali Dizaei, was suspended last January on suspicion of a number of lurid charges, many of which were coolly set out in the *Mail* and other papers devoted to law and order.

His suspension came about a few days before the superintendent was due to go on a course which would have promoted him to the rank of assistant chief constable. Ever since his suspension, the superintendent has been subjected to investigations by the Metropolitan police described by the NBPA as "at best deplorable and at worst an absolute violation of justice".

The allegations against him have now been narrowed down to a single, almost unbelievably monstrous charge: namely that he overcharged his own association for an air ticket to Los Angeles where he spoke by invitation on policing and the race issue. After hours of interminable questioning, it emerges that a travel agent charged about £200 above the flat rate for the ticket. This extra charge was made without the superintendent knowing about it, and of course without any gain to himself. The victim of the overcharge was, er the National Black Police Association which paid for the ticket.

Whether Supt Dizaei remains suspended for much longer remains in doubt. What is not in doubt is that he will be taking the Metropolitan police to a tribunal alleging discrimination on grounds of race.

FROM CAFCASS TO KAFKAESQUE

IT WAS supposed to provide the best service for vulnerable children who are about to go into care or who find themselves at the centre of family breakdown. Instead lord chancellor Derry Irvine's new children and family court advisory and support service (Cafcass) is a shambles.

Irvine: Court short

Rushed into existence in April without adequate funding or preparation, it is already £7m overbudget — undermining, instead of enhancing, services to children and families.

It is dogged by an industrial dispute that is heading for the high court, as Cafcass has tried to force new contracts on the children's guardians — the children's independent advocate in court. The guardians claim the contracts are not child-centred, restrict their flexibility and the amount of time they can spend with individual children, and cut across their independence.

Child welfare officers have been similarly excluded from negotiations over pay and conditions. Lack of adequate funding has meant staff have been forced to fight over limited desks and equipment, or are being encouraged to work from home.

Napo, the probation officers' union, has reported Cafcass to the health and safety executive (HSE) for "putting staff and safety at risk" by having no safety policy or practice. Morale is rock bottom and sickness rates escalating. In some areas there have been threats of walk-outs by child care specialists.

In the meantime the wider aspirations of Cafcass, such as setting up local contact centres, mediation and programmes for victims and perpetrators of abuse and domestic violence, appear to have gone out the window.

The situation is so bad the advisory board on family law has warned Lord Irvine: "We cannot but be critical of the extremely tight timetable which was imposed for the creation of Cafcass. We find it extraordinary that a development as important as Cafcass was treated in this way and we are left with the overriding concern that the aspirations for the service which we expressed in our previous reports may have been lost..."

Fortunately for Irvine, the advisory committee is now being disbanded and won't be able to monitor Cafcass's pisspoor performance any further.

FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...

● **ANTIBIOTIC ALERT:** The medicines control agency (MCA), responsible for licensing drugs, appears to have let beleaguered German pharmaceutical giant Bayer off the hook over controversial antibiotic trials it conducted in the UK involving patients undergoing bowel surgery (*Eye* 1029).

The agency was asked to investigate by whistleblowing British surgeon Stephen Karran. He was concerned that patients had been put at risk from life-threatening infections during the trials because Bayer already knew that the drug, Ciproxin, had been shown to be less effective when taken with other pre-surgery medicines.

Karran had asked the MCA if Bayer had informed it of the research results showing the antibiotic was 50 percent less effective when taken with other drugs, when it sought approval for the surgery trials in UK hospitals. Last week he was informed that while "ideally" Bayer's application "should have contained fuller information", the company had notified the MCA of "the evidence of drug interaction in another context". Its trial design had taken this into account and the MCA did not believe Bayer had "set out to mislead it".

This raises the question of whether indeed the MCA was "misled" and whether doctors and their guinea-pig patients were told of the "drug interaction". *Eye* readers will recall that neither Bayer nor the MCA has been forthcoming about what information was passed on. But perhaps the apparently more robust US equivalent, the food and drug administration (FDA), will be able to find out. The FDA was the driving force behind Bayer's recent disaster – the withdrawal of its money-spinning anti-cholesterol drug, Baycol (also marketed as Lipobay) – following the deaths of 31 patients taking the drug. Last month the FDA took a statement from Karran about the Ciproxin trials.

● **MMR LATEST:** The general medical council (GMC) has postponed the ludicrous hearing against Dr Peter Mansfield, who dared to prescribe single dose alternatives to the controversial mumps, measles and rubella triple vaccine.

Scheduled for last week, it now won't go ahead for at least a month while GMC lawyers apparently gather more evidence in a case which looks increasingly like a health department-inspired witch-hunt.

Angry health workers in Lincolnshire have leaked a copy of a letter from Dr Mandy Bretman, the county's director of public health, seeking "background" information on Dr Mansfield. He used to be a Lincolnshire GP and now runs a private clinic in the area.

In a letter to all GPs' practice managers, Dr Bretman says she wants information including – "being made aware of the separate vaccines being offered at the private clinics; being asked by parents about separate vaccine at the clinic; other services being offered at the clinic; uptake of these services by patients".

In the meantime she warns: "The provision of separate vaccination is not endorsed by Lincolnshire heath authority and goes against department of health policy."

Rather than trying to gather tittle-tattle by underhand methods, it might have been easier to contact Dr Mansfield and his clinic direct. He has never made any secret of his activities and would no doubt be happy to confirm that some "referrals" to his clinics indeed come from other doctors and health workers – as happened in Worcestershire, the health authority that lodged the complaint in the first place.

● **POLICE COMPLAINTS:** There is something seriously wrong when serious complaints against the police go unanswered simply because the force against which allegations are made declines to accept the complaint.

This is what has happened in the disturbing case revealed in the last *Eye* involving Northumbria police and leaked documents suggesting serious irregularities in its investigation of a nurse, Kathleen Atkinson, who was accused of hastening the deaths of terminally ill patients in her care at a Newcastle hospital.

Michael Craik, deputy chief constable of Northumbria, has refused to record complaints made by lawyers acting for Mrs Atkinson. Yet the leaked documents show that charges against her were only dropped after irregularities in evidence gathered by police were drawn to the attention of the crown prosecution service by a concerned senior detective (who was promptly removed from the case).

The police complaints authority (PCA) has said it has no power to investigate if the Northumbria decides not record a complaint and no power to overrule that decision. Now the home office maintains that home secretary David Blunkett is powerless to intervene too. As a spokesman said: "Under the procedures laid down by parliament, the home secretary has no statutory powers to investigate complaints against the police, appoint the investigating officer, or act as an avenue of appeal against decisions which are taken by either the chief officer — or the PCA.

"I regret I cannot offer any further assistance and can only suggest that you continue to pursue your concerns regarding the police and the force direct."

This conveniently enables Northumbria to remain defendant, judge and jury in its own case. Knacker's chief concern, by the way, seems to be about how embarrassing internal documents and tapes came to be in the hands of Mrs Atkinson's solicitor, Richard Haswell.

If Blunkett truly is powerless to intervene, perhaps he can investigate the other serious claim that springs from the documents: that the recent inquest into the deaths of four patients at the hospital may have been misled. Their families, Mrs Atkinson and the public need to know.

LABOUR'S DIRTY DIGGERS

WITH deaths and injuries at work soaring, more of "new" Labour's new business chums are finding themselves in the dock on health and safety matters.

Carillion, the company formerly know as Tarmac, was once a long-term Tory funder. But it has smoothly transferred its affections to Labour. It gives money to the influential New Local Government Network and its staff have been seconded to the department of health to advise on privatisation.

Crucially Labour has handed great swathes of the public sector to the firm through the private finance initiative (PFI), with Carillon taking over hospitals like South Cleveland and Swindon, as well as prisons like Altcourse, Onley and Rye Hill, and courts like Manchester magistrates.

However, the firm itself was up before Birmingham magistrates last week where the health and safety executive was prosecuting it for unsafe working on train lines outside Birmingham New Street Station... while constructing a trackside safety footpath! The case was adjourned to 21 September.

Building firm Costain, like Carillion, was also a long-term funder of the Tory party but now seems to get on well with Labour: health secretary Alan Milburn gave it a £75m PFI contract at Kings College Hospital, London. However, the firm's safety record is grim. At the beginning of August Costain was fined £200,000 — one of the HSE's largest awards — for its involvement in the death of Paul Davies. Davies was crushed to death between a 13-tonne excavator and a concrete wall in October 1999 when building a sewer near Bridgend, South Wales.

Devonport Management Ltd was also a Tory baby — a private firm set up to service the navy's nuclear subs in Plymouth. However, Labour has enthusiastically embraced it, and in the 2001 Queen's birthday honours Tony Blair awarded Tony Pryor, its chairman, a CBE. All told Labour has awarded six MBEs to Devonport Management's managers since 1998. But their employees have been treated less than honourably. On 21 August the firm pleaded guilty to exposing 24 subcontractors to deadly asbestos dust. The HSE representative said workers could have been exposed to up to 90 times the exposure standard. The contractors were refurbishing a building; but while Devonport Management has its own licensed asbestos removal team and its own laboratory to analyse asbestos, the workers were told the building was free of the substance.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In The Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

THE phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed has borrowed a further £88m from the Royal Bank of Scotland following an earlier and much bigger £350m loan. This time Fayed has hocked his prized Ritz Hotel in Paris to RBS for the money. The earlier 20-year loan is secured on Harrods. These loans raise serious questions for those who buy into the Fayed fable and wish to endow him with near billionaire status.

The latest RBS loan is for 141m euros and was agreed in May. The Ritz Hotel company immediately drew down all but some 3m euros. The reason? Just as the £350m was largely needed to refinance Harrods borrowings, due mainly to be repaid to HSBC next year, so the Ritz loan has gone to pay off a smaller German bank loan.

Only less than three years ago Fayed agreed to borrow around £52m (FF550m) from the Depfa bank to refinance a smaller Swiss loan secured on the Paris hotel. This loan was to be repaid in 2014. He has now repaid it entirely plus a further £10m with RBS cash which has to be repaid in 2009.

The Depfa loan was expensive at more than 5 percent and costing £3m in interest last year. Just how much Fayed will be paying RBS is unclear. But the bank now has a charge over the loss-making hotel as its security plus a private Fayed apartment building where Diana and Dodi stayed.

Last year, despite occupancy and turnover going up to £36m, the hotel company still lost a little changed £1,270,000 even after a one-off benefit of some £500,000 as a result of a curious deal between the Ritz and another Fayed company. Accumulated losses are more than £90m since Fayed bought the Paris landmark.

The British-registered Ritz Hotel company was controlled by Fayed through a trio of offshore companies. But last year one of these, Champli SA of Luxembourg, was acquired by the Ritz Hotel company in return for shares valued at just £692,500 which suggests the whole company is only worth £25m!

This was clearly something of an under-valuation as Champli brought with it trade and assets worth some £17m, including a previously undisclosed £9.5m (FF100m) loan from the accommodating Depfa bank granted in January 2000, a year after the £52m financing. Both these Fayed loans have now been repaid courtesy of RBS.

But not before Champli had been able to *reduce the Ritz* losses by some £500,000 as a result of the "over provision for eviction indemnities provided to a tenant" of property owned by the Luxembourg company.

These details emerge in the latest Ritz Hotel accounts to December 2000 which were filed last month. The accounts also show how Fayed uses the Ritz not only to borrow in order to justify his supposed pharoanic status but also as a private piggy bank. During the year the company advanced as much as £229,000 to its chairman which was repaid by the year end. Momo must be economising. The previous year it was as much as £337,000. No doubt the Inland Revenue will be scrutinising these interest-free advances to see if they are received in the UK and might be disguised taxable UK income.

Another interesting financial fact is that the Ritz has doubled its provision for litigation – such as no doubt to prove that Diana and Dodi were not killed by a drunken Fayed employee – to more than £500,000.

The disclosure of multi-million loans made to offshore Fayed companies such as Champli suggests how the phoney pharaoh finances so many loss-making ventures – the Ritz, *Punch*, Fulham FC. At Fulham there may also be further help through some astute financial engineering involving HSBC and the Gerling insurance giant as detailed in *Eye* 1032.

Talking of Fulham, it is good to see former *Mail on Sunday* crime hack Chester Stern now being paid to be a Fayed mouthpiece at the premiership soccer club after years of unpaid service writing pro-pharaoh articles with the help of his former Scotland Yard colleague and long-time Fayed security boss John Macnamara.

"Just think of it as Casual Dress Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and *Friday..."*

EXASPERATED Equitable Life policyholders will be reassured to note that one of the new directors with their best interests at heart has already been implicated in a mis-selling scandal.

Michael Pickard was selected by new chairman Vanni Treves to be part of the "clean hands" slate earlier this year to help the mutual avoid impending insolvency as a result of the guaranteed annuity rate fiasco and its accompanying £2.6bn and growing black hole.

Pickard is an actuary who is currently also chairman of the Mirror Group Newspapers pension trustees. But he is better known as the former appointed actuary (statutory guardian of the policyholders), chief executive and chairman of another leading mutual, Royal London. Pickard effectively ran Royal London from 1983 until 1999.

How embarrassing therefore that only in July – two months after Pickard joined the Equitable board – Royal London was fined £400,000 by the Personal Investment Authority for mis-selling to 65,000 savers who are to receive £15m in compensation. The PIA found Royal London's sales force guilty of widespread mis-selling of endowments, life policies and savings plans between 1996 and 1999. Salesmen recommended unsuitable products and failed to keep adequate records.

Only in January, before Pickard was selected as suitable to join the Equitable new brooms, United Friendly, taken over by Royal London in 2000 after he resigned, was also fined £700,000 for mis-selling with-profit endowments.

With such a background Equitable policyholders, who were also the victim of major mis-selling through the failure to disclose the GAR liability, can have every confidence that Pickard will be on their side when it comes to offering compensation (part of the likely package to buy their votes for a deal with the GAR policyholders) and pursuing those former Equitable executives responsible.

It will be very interesting to see how the new Equitable board deals with the expected opinion of Nicholas Warren QC that policyholders were mislead by the old board in not disclosing the GAR liability, which they knew to be at least £1.6bn, and its implications of insolvency.

One of those in the frame will be former managing director Roy Ranson – not that he feels any responsibility, despite what his former colleagues suggest. The government inquiry into the Equitable scandal is certain to question Ranson, who proudly boasts of his role in selling GAR policies and keeping quiet about the problem-because there wasn't one!

Lord Penrose, who will carry out the inquiry, may want to ask Ranson what he meant by explaining to trade magazine *Financial Adviser* last month about the GAR policies that "as the years went by the treasury became more relaxed about the business"?

Regulatory failure is high on the list of the expected Penrose targets. But those Equitable victims wanting a report which forces the government to be found guilty and have to pay compensation should recall that the initial Barlow Clowes inquiry acquitted the Department of Timidity & Inaction. Compensation was only paid after a subsequent and more independent probe by the parliamentary ombudsman. That may still be required if the truth is to emerge about how DTI, treasury and Financial Services Authority watchdogs were once again asleep at the wheel.

CLEARLY the Nigerian "419" letter scam is like an epidemic infecting ever more countries of West Africa. Following the warning in the last *Eye* about emails from Ivory Coast about the $10.5m belonging to the late David Sankoh of Sierra Leone's mining department which was looking for a bank account to receive it, comes word of a similar con from nearby Togo.

An *Eye* reader received an e-mail from a

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG

MEGACORP BUSINESS SCHOOL
BASICALLY, THE MARKET IS ALL ABOUT ALLOCATING RESOURCES...
ALLOCATING RESOURCES ? HOW ?
WELL... TO RICH PEOPLE MOSTLY !
97.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS!

"The Board believes that the key factors that will contribute to the Group's successful future performance include... the retention, training and recruitment of well-qualified employees"

Business & Prospects Guide
Bradford & Bingley plc 20/10/00

"Former building society Bradford & Bingley is to cut 500 jobs in a bid to reduce costs"

News Item, 22/8/01

generous "Mr Koffi", director of the audit department of the Banque Togolaise pour le Commerce et l'Industrie who has $8.5m looking for a discreet foreign bank account home. The cash belongs to the unfortunate unnamed victim of an air crash in 1999 but has not been claimed by his relatives. Thirty per cent of the cash is waiting for anyone who will pretend to be a relative and provides the bank account outside Togo to receive the money, the balance to go to Koffi and his partners who cannot have foreign bank accounts and of course will help to steal the money.

Not surprisingly you are asked not to contact "Mr Koffi" at the bank but on his mobile. Perhaps because he, like the money, is not to be found at the bank.

MORE about Irishman John Kealey, one of the major players involved in the £100m Thai boiler room scam. Before he was massaging investors out of their money from Bangkok Kealey was running a similar boiler room operation in the Indonesian capital Djakarta. This was called PT Dolok Permai, which also used the business name International Asset Management even though that did not exist as a company.

Like the Thai investment massage parlours, Dolok Permai also targeted Australian and New Zealand investors with obscure US shares from the NASDAQ OTC pink sheets. It recruited telesales operators in the UK and Ireland some three years ago.

Kealey, who is suspected of links to the IRA, is described by a former salesman as running the Djakarta operation on behalf of its shadowy American masters who provided the stocks to pump 'n' dump. He was said to have previously been involved in a Dublin company which provided "sucker lists" of victims for cold calling.

Dolok was linked to similar operations in Manila, Taiwan and Hong Kong and had ties to boiler rooms in Prague, Madrid, Barcelona and Luxembourg.

The Djakarta operation closed down in 1999. Many of those involved then left either for Thailand, like Kealey, Manila or Spain. Manila was cracked down on earlier this year before the Bangkok raids. Several of the names linked to Dolok and its shares pop up in the Bangkok investigation. Meanwhile beware: the boiler rooms will soon be in operation from new territories as those behind them, organised crime or terrorists, have an unlimited supply of worthless stocks to sell and experts in exciting the greed glands of the gullible.

'Henry Slicker & Associates'

Stock Horror

Not all rubbish is equal

Value today of £100 invested in the float of...

...rubbish disposal group **Waste Recycling plc**

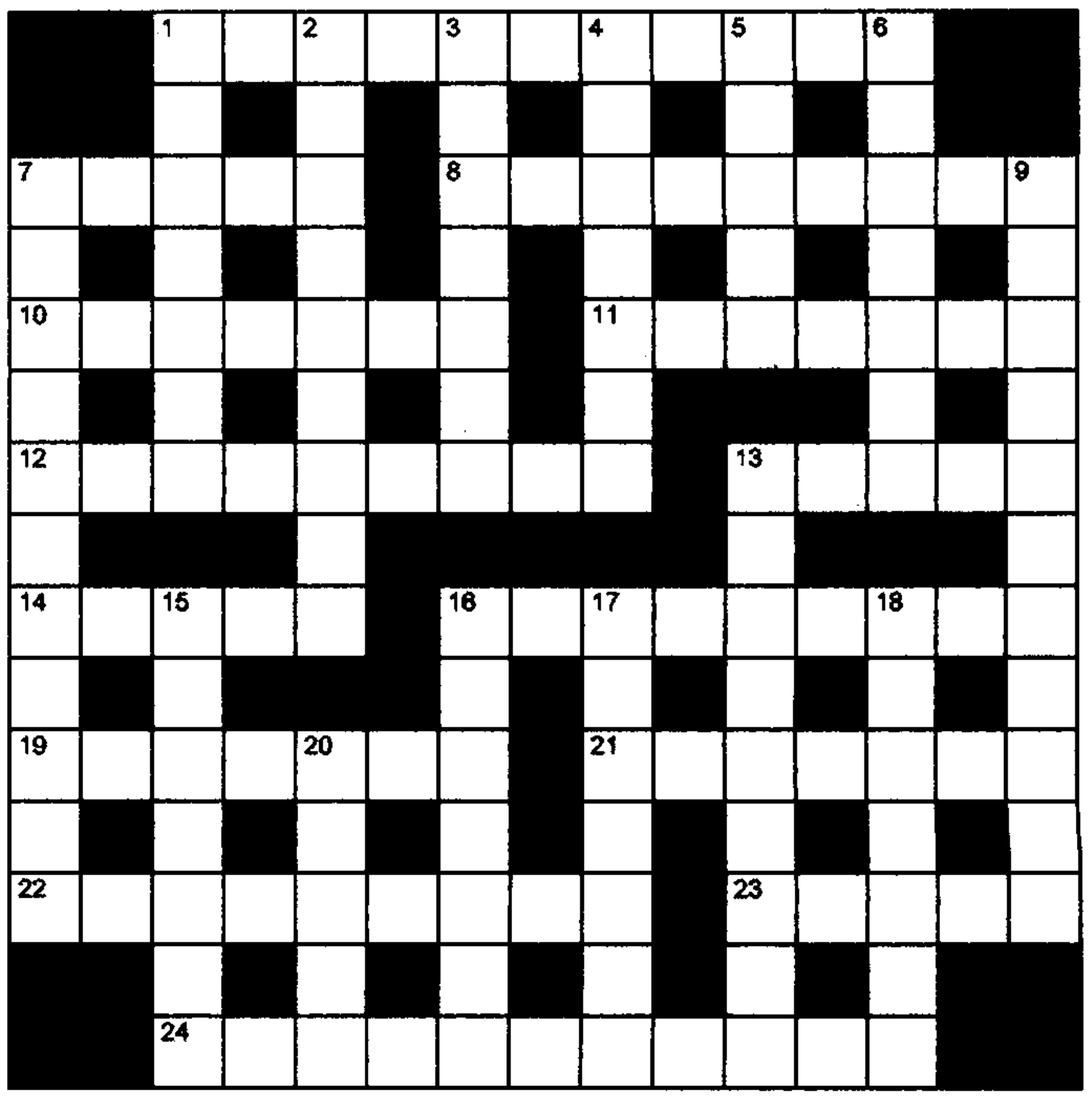
£1,105

...rubbish travel company **lastminute.com**

£9

EYE CROSSWORD 191

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 14 September 2001.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.

190 winner DOUG MARSDEN

ACROSS

1 Turn on Radio One, chaps? – get screwed (11)
7 Miffed Rupert drops *Times* leader – getting to be more like Virgin (5)
8 Accepting the bird, United beaten but not clobbered (2,3,4)
10 Catastrophe! Liam's a tragic character at heart (7)
11 Party to a secret, having penetrated Roger's butt (7)
12 Castrating and providing soldiers for international force (9)
13 Awfully shy about keep fit – puffs extravagantly (5)
14 Tender Dicky snuggles up to Brenda (5)
16 Copy of *Eye* one has to find agreeable (4-5)
19 Ineffectual types coming out with "Shun ECU!" (7)
21 Frank gets a feeling of excitement with a chest (2,5)
22 Made invalid accidentally fill non-closing undies (9)
23 Beer spewed on Charles' old instrument (5)
24 Archer triumphant as a storyteller (11)

DOWN

1 Lincoln offers little support for a female entering a joint (7)
2 "Having an erection requires craft" – Iain Duncan Smith type (4-5)
3 "Paperwork's pointless coming around one" – Cyclops (7)
4 The latest party to an affair (2,5)
5 Sex letters, articles (5)
6 What's this? Dead, having an erection and primed? (5,2)
7 Nuts are one up after backing Ken Clarke type (3-8)
9 "Money I reject – and Conservative leader getting into pussy" – Iain Duncan Smith? (11)
13 Oral sex, above all, is one way to go down (4,5)
15 Something for addicts of blow job equipment/clobber (3,4)
16 Girls need whoppers to get round Dick (7)
17 Wrecking European Union is Duncan Smith's official proposal, initially – "God's work" (4,3)
18 Our gutless Brian's awful hard shaft (4,3)
20 Frigidity causing Fanny to change her initial (5)

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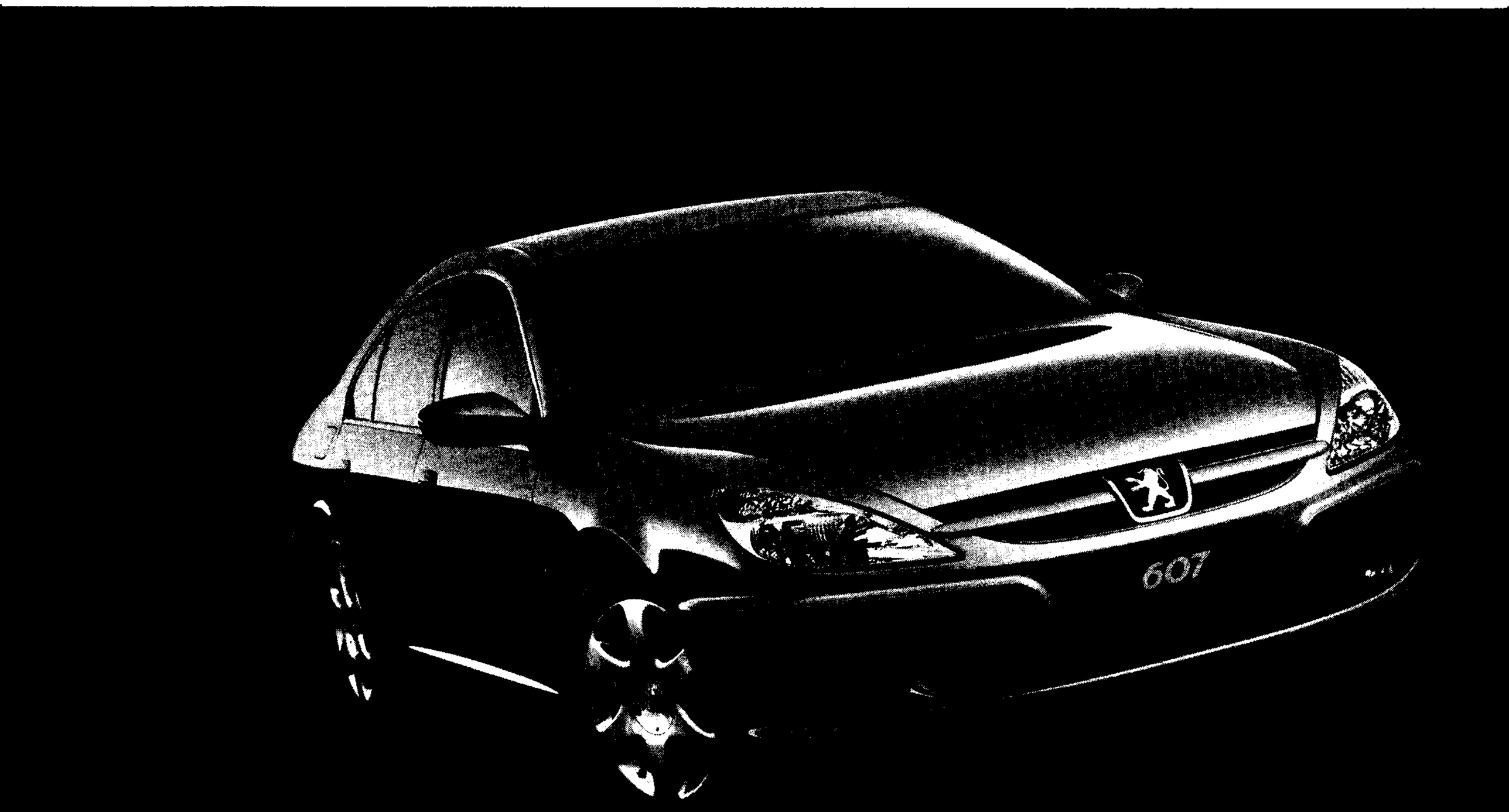

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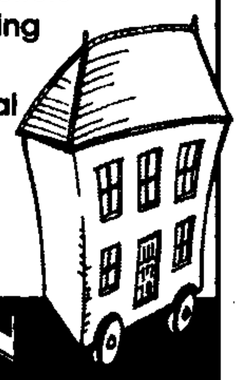

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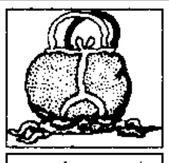

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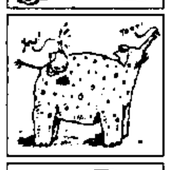

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WARM, SENSITIVE, articulate male active young sixties, GSOH, enjoys arts, conversation, good food and wine – open marriage – seeks sensual woman friend/lover for worthwhile relationship. South London. Box 0434.

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TALL, BROADMINDED MAN, 42, n/s GSOH, WLTM nice like-minded lady (younger) of similar persuasion to become best friends and maybe more. SW Home Counties. Box 1934.

ADVERTISER (CENTRAL LONDON) WLTM neat bottomed female. Companionship, literary interests, dining out. Box 1834.

DIVORCED, PROFESSIONAL MALE, 48, small and originally perfectly formed - now showing signs of wear and tear - missing someone to care about, seeks, sexy, submissive lady, 50 - 60, for discreet, uncomplicated relationship, London area. Box 2434.

UNUSUAL AMERICAN IMPORT, 50s, 5'2", into politics, travel, arts and conversation, seeks congenial male academic or similar for interesting times. London Box 2634.

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RUGGEDLY ATTRACTIVE wealthy 52 year old 6'1" broadshouldered single, no ties, seeks attractive slim, non-smoker 35-40 years for wining dining, laughs – leading to travel. GSOH essential, no hang-ups. Children OK. South Manchester. Recent photo and brief letter appreciated. Box 2934.

LOVELY, LONELY LADY WLTM lovely, lonely man, semi-retired for interesting things – golf, theatre cruises etc. South London. Box 0934.

SPANISH BLONDE. 26, single female, looking for a mature and lavish business like man, for mutually rewarding friendship/relationship. Box 0236.

MEDIA LECTURER, young 46, cuddly, caring, soppy, hippyish, lonely, not ugly – likes arts, travel, music, driving – seeks elegant professional, childless woman. Goal: love, marriage, London. Box 0436.

CLEVER, INTERESTING, SUCCESSFUL, publisher/writer, 52, probably attractive, wealthy enough, seeks interesting younger unusual woman looking for someone like-minded to appreciate her. Box 0536.

PROFESSIONAL GENTLEMAN, 50S, ROMANTIC, KIND, GENEROUS AND SUPPORTIVE, wishes to meet mature uninhibited lady, for occasional regular liaisons with continuing friendship and relationship of mutual benefit. Discretion and integrity assured, and hoped for. All replies answered, but only one lady sought after. Age status, etc, unimportant, but warm heart is! Box 0636.

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REMARKABLE – Though otherwise normal woman, 44, – seeks similar man for genuine relationship and marriage (boring?). Box 0936.

INTERESTING PROFESSIONAL guy, 41, sensitive GSOH, attached – would like to meet witty, sensual lady for friendship, conversation, excitement and passion. North West – isithebe@hotmail.com or Box 1236.

MELLOW MALE, YOUTHFUL 60, occasionally assertive, medium height, large build, follically challenged, WLTM pleasant unassertive female for discreet relationship. Photo appreciated. London/Essex. Box 1336.

SINGLE MALE, 39 – slim, intelligent, couch potato tendencies, seeks naughty and nice older woman. London 3336.

STRICT BUT KIND UPPER-CLASS Englishman presentable, solvent, fifties – seeks a disobedient lady living in London or home counties. Discretion assured – so pluck up your courage write with your telephone number and best time to phone. Box 1636.

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SMART GENTLEMAN, 42, slim, 5'11" W.L.T. escort ladies any event or holiday/travel. No fee. Total discretion. Box 2136.

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30-13-53 7098129 Lloyds 30k Background available. Box 0336.

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FEMALE DESIGN GRADUATE needs £3300 to strengthen and improve her energy – thankyou. HSBC 40-39-20, 61092006.

EYE AM LOVELY family woman in need of assistance from philanthropic person. Any donations welcome. Seek £200k to make fresh start. Box 0836.

STRUGGLING GRADUATE trying to dig himself out of a deep hole needs £12,000. Any contributions used wisely. Lloyds 30-91-47, 01198572.

ARTIST NEEDS £2000 for tuition fees to complete Masters. Help appreciated. NatWest 52-30-50, 06609155.

DESPERATE. Please help me get bad and dangerous people off my back. You may be the difference between life and death. Halifax sort code 11-01-76, Account 00281072.

SUICIDAL, menopausal and desperate. Halifax sort code 11-09-41, Account Number 00643952.

MATURE STUDENT , married with family, desperately needs £20k to stay afloat. Please help if you can. Thanks. LLOYDS A/C: 30-94-47; 02494935, or Box 1036.

INTERNATIONAL ATHLETE who represented Britain for five years looking for sponsorship funding. Back from rehab and need to go forward to complete internationally again. Please E-mail: alilibra2@aol.com

MATURE LADY, homeless after marital break, desperately needs help to rebuild life. Box 1136.

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DEBTS PREVENTING LIFE beginning at 40 for motivated woman. Need £20,000. Any help much appreciated. Vross38@excite.co.uk - sort code 80 02 38, account number 07071409.

PLEASE HELP student needs to raise 2000 by November for environmental trip to south America. Barclays 20 77 85, 70597465

ARTIST SELLING LIFE'S WORK for new start. Over 90 pieces available – for less than Tracy's bed. For list and web site apply Box 1536.

OVERSEAS student recently completed PhD but sponsors (mother and brother) killed in car accident. Need airfare home to ship books. Donations greatly appreciated. Barclays 20-10-53, 60812617.

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10K TO HELP feed the cows, sheep, chickens and children. We have student loans to pay off and we need help. We could negotiate payback. Box 2936.

POSTGRADUATE MEDIC from Uganda needs £16,200 to complete course and return to serve the needs of his country, Sept 2000. Help gratefully received. Barclays sort-code 20-10-53, Account 90926957.

NEED £10. Really 10,000 x £10 – to pay bank following business failure – but every little helps! Alliance and Leicester 72-60-04, 55981086.

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SINGLE MUM of academically gifted 15 year old son (10 A* GCSE's + 2 AS levels already), seeks £12,000 to supplement scholarship granted at public school so he can complete his A levels there. Please help. NATWEST 54-10-56, 13805665.

£7000 IN DEBT. Landlord ready to evict me. Please help. Any donation gratefully received. Thank you. 83-23-25, 00137559.

PLEASE HELP. Left home to escape violent partner, single mother needs £700 to get out of B&B and into rented flat. HALIFAX 11-03-94, 00397767.

DESPERATE - determined female 29, training in energy transmission/life software with Chinese guru needs £50,000 for next three years training. LloydsTSB 30–18–16 Account Number 0121488.

ENGLISHMAN, WRONGLY ARRESTED AND CHARGED IN THAILAND, is desperately seeking financial assistance to clear name. Enquiries to: DEREK FISHER, H.M. Consul, British Embassy. Bangkok.

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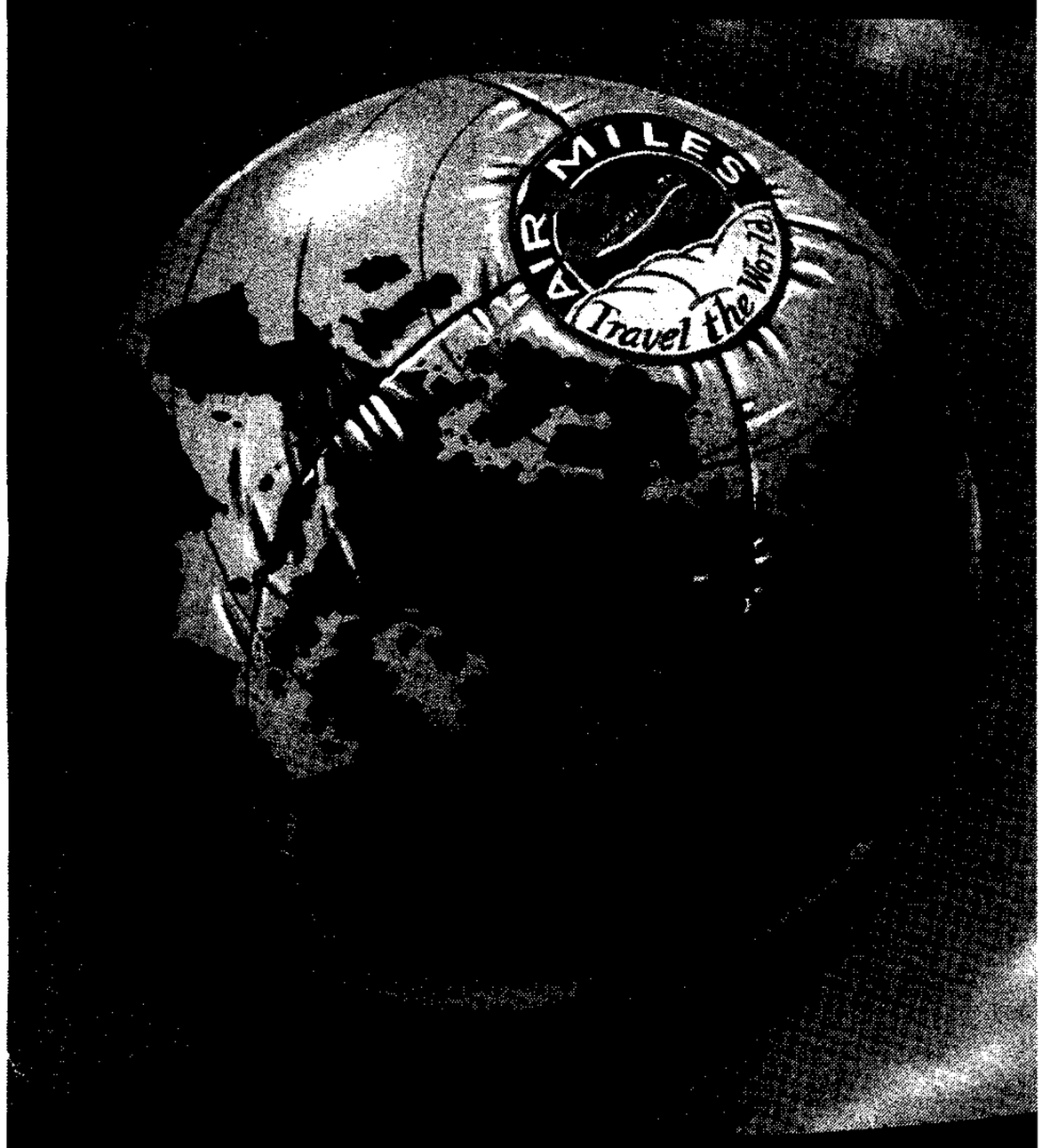

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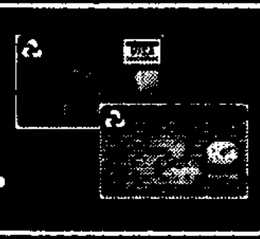

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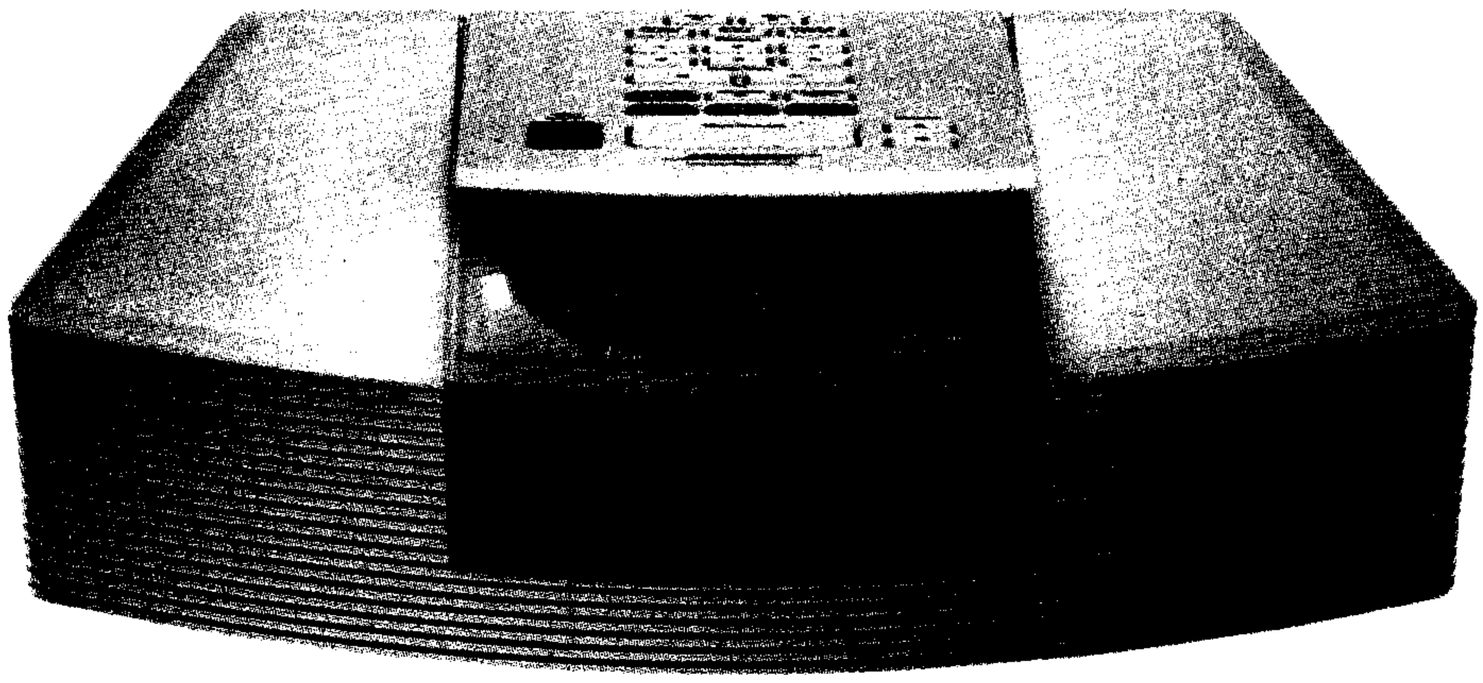

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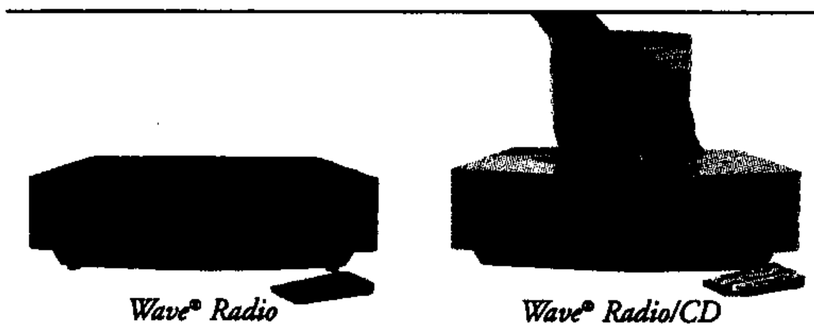

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